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DANTE'S DIVINA COMMEDIA

THE INFERNO

TRANSLATED BY

W. P. WILKIE

ADVOCATE

EDINBURGH

EDMONSTON AND DOUGLAS

1862

~~280. c. 193.~~

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PREFACE.

THE text generally followed in this translation is that of Fraticelli (Florence, 1860); but I have occasionally taken a view of Dante's meaning for which none of his editors are responsible.

GREENHILL, *November* 1862.

INFERNO.

CANTO I.

WHEN midway on life's journey here,
I found me in a wood obscure,
for I had lost the path direct.
A dreary task 'twould be to tell
how savage, harsh and dense that wood, 5
to think of which renews a fear
as bitter as the fear of death;
but to describe the good obtained,
I now relate what I encountered there.
'Twere hard to say how I the forest entered first,
for slumber dulled my senses when
the true way I forsook.
But having neared a mountain's side,
which rose beyond the shadows that
oppressed my heart with dread, 15
I looked aloft, and saw its summit shine,

vested already in that planet's beam,
which guides man right on every way.
Then was the fear a little calmed,
which in the fountain of my heart remained 20
throughout the night of sorrowing;
and like to one who, gasping hard,
has from the sea escaped to shore,
and at the perilous flood looks back aghast,
my spirit, tremulous still, 25
reviewed the valley none
had ever left alive.
My weary frame reposed awhile,
upon the lonely strand my journey I pursued,
the resting foot the lower still, 30
when lo, almost at where the steep began,
a Leopard, very swift and light,
and clothed in spotted skin,
appeared, nor from my face retired,
but on my path so tantalizing proved, 35
That from the toilsome course I oft was fain to turn.
The time was early morn,
and rose the sun among the stars
that were with him when Love Divine
first moved those beauteous things. 40
Thus of that creature's spangled coat

inspired in me a pleasing hope
the morning hour and season sweet.
Yet not so light my heart had grown,
that I without dismay a Lion now beheld 45
approaching, and confronting me
with head erect, and aspect ravenous:
filling the very air with dread;
and then a She-Wolf, whose insatiate hungerings
were by her meagerness confessed: 50
and who already had a grief to many been.
Such heaviness was brought on me
by terror of her dreadful look,
I lost all hope of the ascent;
and as a man who greedily acquires, 55
when comes the hour that sweeps his wealth away,
weeps, and afflicts himself in all his thoughts,
so grieved I when that restless beast
obstructed so my way that, more and more,
she drove me back to where the sun was mute. 60
But when, repulsed, I sought again the valley low,
there came before me one
feeble in voice, as through disuse of speech.
Him seeing in this wilderness,
"Be pitiful," I cried, 65
"whate'er thou art, or shade or veritable man."

"Not man, though I was once a man," he said.
"My parents were of Lombardy,
and Mantuans both.
"Sub Julio born, tho' late, 70
I lived at Rome, in good Augustus' reign,
when pagan gods prevailed.
"A bard was I, and sang of him,
Anchise's son, who came from Troy,
when haughty Ilium in her ashes lay. 75
"But thou; why to the thorns retreating thus?
Why scaling not this mountain of delight,
perennial source of every joy."
"Virgil art thou! that well-spring whence
such ample streams of eloquence proceed," 80
with brow abashed, I answered him.
"Glory and light of poets all,
avail me now long study, ardent love
devoted to thy volume rich.
My master and my author thou! 85
To thee alone I owe the style
whose beauty has my honours won.
"Behold the beast which forced me back.
O save me from her, famous Sage,
for she doth make my pulses quake." 90
"Another way must thou advance,"

that presence said, when he beheld me weep,
"if thou wouldst shun this savage place.
"The beast that so dismayeth thee
none in her paths permits, 95
but thwarteth them and slays.
Malevolent and vile,
insatiable her cravings are,
and whetted as she eats.
"With many beasts she's leagued, 100
and others she will wed, until the Greyhound come,
to painful death to drag her down.—
Not lands and pelf shall nourish him,
but wisdom, love, and righteousness.
From Feltro unto Feltro shall his kingdom be, 105
and raise our humbled Italy,
for which the maid Camilla bled,
with Nisus, Turnus, and Euryalus.
Through all the cities he shall hunt the Wolf,
till she be driven back to Hell, 110
whence envy let her loose.
"Now I, discerning for thy good,
advise that thou shouldst follow me,
that I may lead thee through a place eternal, where
upon thine ear shall fall the shriekings of despair,
and thou shalt see the agony of ancient spirits, who

the second death implore;
and, after them, a race by hope in flames upheld,
the hope that they in due time shall
the blissful ranks attain: 120
to which, shouldst thou desire to rise,
a purer soul shall guide thee up,
when, turning, I commit thee to her care;
for He, the King who reigns above,
since I against his laws rebelled, 125
decrees that to his City none by me be led.

"Imperial He in every place, and thence he rules,
for there is fixed his citadel and throne:
O happy are the souls elect!"

"Ah, Poet, I conjure thee," answering, I cried,
"by Him who was to thee unknown—
that this distress, and greater ills I shun—
to lead me as thou dost propose,
that I may see St. Peter's gate,
and look on those afflicted ones." 135

Then moved the Poet on, and I kept close behind.

CANTO II.

THE day was closing, and the gathering shades
all creatures on the earth from toil released,
while I alone, a solitary man,
prepared myself for steadfast conflict with
the arduous road, and pity keen, 5
which my unerring memory shall recall.
O Muse, O lofty Genius, aid me now!
O Mind, which all I saw on record put,
here shall appear thy pure nobility.
"Ah Poet, Guide," I thus began, 10
"consider if my virtue quite sufficient be,
ere thou commit me to this high emprise.
"Thy verse has told how Silvio's sire
in mortal flesh among immortals walked,
retaining his full consciousness; 15
but if the great Antagonist of ill
this grace allowed, considering the effect,
and who and what should from Eneas spring,
it seemeth not amiss unto the thoughtful mind,
since he of lordly Rome, and her empire 20

was chosen founder in empyreal Heaven,
and Rome and her dominions were
established as the holy place
where great St. Peter's heir should sit;
whilst in that journey, vaunted so by thee, 25
prophetic lips revealed the efforts that should lead
to victory, and to the papal robe.
The Chosen Vessel, too, among the disembodied went,
to gather confirmation of that faith
which leadeth to salvation's way. 30

"But I, why should I go? and who permitteth me?
Eneas I am not, nor am I Paul.
Unworthy I appear,
and, venturing to go,
most foolish I shall be: 35
Wiser art thou and rightly wilt discern."

As one unwilling what he lately willed,
reversing all his plans as novel thoughts arise,
swerves wholly from his first design,
thus, on that gloomy shore, my purpose ebbed away,
mid doubt and fears deterring from
that enterprise, so suddenly embraced.

"If I thy meaning gather right,"
that shade magnanimous replied,
"thy soul is by base cowardice subdued, 45

that phantom which persuadeth men
their bravest resolutions blindly to forsake,
as doubtful shapes at night the forest beasts alarm.
"That thou no longer fear,
know wherefore I am come, and what of thee I heard,
when pity for thee moved me first:
"The spirits in suspense were my companions, when
there summoned me a Dame, so lovely and so blest,
I begged of her at once my service to command.
"Ah! brighter than the day-star were her beaming eyes;
and gently she began in accents sweet and low,
angelically tuned:
'O courteous soul of Mantua,
whose fame on earth endureth still,
and with the world shall last, 60
one well by me, but not by Fortune loved,
is in the wilderness impeded so,
that, in dismay, he turneth back,
and now, I fear, from what in Heaven's said,
he may so far have wanderèd, 65
that my late succour will be sent in vain.
Haste then, and with thy rich persuasive tongue,
and with assistance aiding him,
console me by his rescue soon.
"'I who request am Beatrice, 70

come from a place I long to see again.
Love drew me here and makes me speak.
When I before my Lord shall be,
thy praises I will oft repeat.'

"She ceased, and I replied: 75
'O Lady, high in virtue, and through whom
mankind excels all other creatures that
beneath Heaven's smallest circle dwell,
so eagerly my heart to thy desire responds,
obedience on the instant would delay appear: 80
unneeded is another word thy pleasure to explain.

"'But tell me why thou wert not loath
to come unto this centre, from that ample space
thou fain wouldst seek again?'

"'Since thou dost search the cause of this, 85
I briefly will reveal,' she said,
'how, undismayed, I venture here:
Those things alone are to be feared
which have the powers of injuring,
no others need a tremour cause. 90
Now such I am in mercy made,
your sorrows pass me by, and through
the flames of your abode I glide unscathed.

"'A gentle maid in Heaven so tenderly laments
the evil lot of him I send thee to assist, 95

that Justice stern to Mercy's voice doth yield.
Beseeching, she to Lucia called, and said:
'Thy faithful one hath need of thee;
Unto thy care do I commend him now.'
Then Lucia, of all cruelty the foe, 100
arose, and came to where
with, ancient Rachel, I, in contemplation, sat:
'Ho Beatrice,' she said, 'true soul divine,
why dost not succour him who loved thee so
that from the giddy crowd he turned away? 105
Art deaf unto his piteous cry,
and blind unto the death he wrestles with
in that dark flood below?'
"'None seeking gain,
or shunning loss, ere hurried more 110
than, at these words, did I,
descending from my bright abode,
confiding in thy chastened eloquence,
which honours thee, and those whom it doth charm.'
"When Beatrice had ended thus, 115
her speaking eyes, suffused with tears, she raised,
and thereupon my zeal was mightily increased.
"Thus at her will to thy relief I climbed,
and saved thee from the Wolf,
obstructor of thy way upon the Mount Sublime. 120

"What ails thee then? and wherefore this delay?
why should thy heart so timid be?
With courage should thy soul exult,
since three such blessed ladies thus
care for thee in the court of Heaven, 125
and I thy guardian am."

As flowerets, by the night's chill air
bent down and shut, revive with dawn,
and on their stems, unfolded, stand erect,
so now my vanished valour lived again, 130
and to my heart such strengthening warmth flowed
that, frankly, I, with cheerfulness, exclaimed:

"O bountiful that Lady, hastening to my aid,
and courteous thou obeying her
so gracious and benign command. 135
With longing hast thou filled my breast
this journey to begin,
and to my first resolve with ardour I revert.

"On then, for by one wish we both are moved;
and thou my Guide, my Lord, my Master art." 140

He, thus addressed, now forward stept,
and, on the thorny way, my daring task commenced.

CANTO III.

"THROUGH me unto the land of woe.
Through me unto eternal pain.
Through me unto the souls accurst.
By justice was my Maker moved.
By power divine my fabric rose, 5
by wisdom high and primal love.
All who before me were create
immortals were; and I eternal am.
Abandon hope who enters here."
I saw these words in letters black 10
above a gate inscribed, and cried alarmed:
"O Master dear, a fearful threat is there."
Then he as one prepared:
"Now must all doubt be left behind;
all cowardice be dead.
Behold the place where thou shalt see
the spirits sad
who missed their souls' beatitude."
Then, with my hand in his,

and comforting with cheerful smile, 20
he led me in to view the secret things.
Such sighs, complaints, and wailings loud
resounded through the starless air,
that I upon that threshold wept.
Unnumbered tongues and dialects rude, 25
with cries of pain, and accents fierce,
hoarse screams, and hand strokes loud
a tumult make, which, raging, whirls
around that space by endless night obscured,
as sand doth fly upon the whirlwind's breath. 30
Distracted by those horrors, I
unto my Master cried: "What sounds are these;
and who are so by anguish torn?"
"To this are doomed," he said,
"the wretched souls of those 35
who won in life nor praise nor blame.
Now herd they with the caitiff crew
of angels, that nor rebels were,
nor faithful found, but self-engrossed;
whom Heaven expelled his beauty to preserve,
whom Hell obtaineth not,
that she from them no glory win."
Then I: "O say what pains afflict them thus;
and why so bitterly they grieve."

"That I in brief will tell," he said. 45
"These have no hope that they shall cease to be,
and their blind life is sunk so low,
they envy every lot besides.
Forgotten are their names on earth;
disdained are they by Justice and by Mercy too.
Speak not of them, but look, and pass.
Then I, while gazing round, an ensign saw,
that whirled, and sped so swiftly on,
it seemed to scorn repose.
Behind it flocked a crowd so vast 55
of shadows, that I ne'er had dreamt
death could so many have of life deprived.
Among them some I recognised;
and marked the form of him
who weakly left the Papal Chair. 60
Then I, indeed, perceived
that these the paltry wretches were
hateful to God and to his foes alike:
whose darkened souls had never truly lived.
Naked they ran, pursued and stung 65
by hornets and by wasps,
till their pricked faces streamed with blood,
which, mixing with their tears,
was at their feet by loathsome worms sucked.

When from this sight I raised mine eyes 70
lo, on a river's bank, another throng I saw.
"Tell me, O Master," eagerly I asked,
who these may be, and wherefore they
impatient are to pass that flood:
as I discern, e'en through the darksome air?" 75
"That thou wilt know," he coldly said,
"when we secure our footing near
the mournful shore of Acheron."
With eyes down-cast and burning cheek,
fearing I had offended him, 80
I said no more till we that river reached.
I then beheld, approaching in a bark,
an aged man, hoary with ancient hair,
who shouted: "Woe to you ye souls depraved,
ne'er hope to look on heaven's light. 85
Unto the other coast I ferry you:
to fire and ice, and endless gloom.
"But thou, live man," to me he said,
"mingle not here with dead men's souls."
Then, seeing I still lingered there: 90
"By other way, by other port," he cried,
"must thou the river cross:
A stronger boat thy weight requires."
"Vex not thyself, O Charon," said my Guide.

"for this is willed where can be done 95
the thing desired. Demand no more."
Fell low at this the shaggy cheeks
of that grim pilot of the dark lagoon,
and his fierce eyes like fire-wheels flamed.
The spent and naked souls collected there, 100
all paled, and chattered with their teeth,
soon as they heard that old man's words.
Their Maker they blasphemed, their sires,
the human race, the time and place
of their own birth; the seed from which they sprang.
Then all together shuddered down,
bitterly weeping, to that strand accurst,
reserved for all who their Creator scorn.
Charon, the fiend, with blazing eyes,
beckons them on, and gathers them, 110
striking the tardy with his ready oar.
As autumn leaves fall from the trees,
in quick succession fluttering down,
till on the earth they all are shed,
so Adam's evil brood, at Charon's beck, 115
slip one by one, down that drear shore,
as at his call the falcon drops.
Then voyage they o'er the livid wave,

and ere they on the further bank are cast,
on this have gathered kindred hosts. 120
"My son," the courteous Master said,
"all sons of wrath when dead,
from every land, assemble here.
And prompt are they to cross the stream,
for heavenly justice spurs them on 125
till fear into desire is turned.
Here passeth ne'er a virtuous soul,
and so if Charon growled at thee,
with his denial may thy heart be cheered."
Scarce was this said, when that dark land 130
so quaked, that of that hour my dread
yet bursts o'er me in clammy dew.
A furnace blast swept through the waste,
vermilion lightnings shone,
and, staggering, I, 135
unconscious, fell.

CANTO IV.

BROKE the deep slumber in my brain,
a thunder crash, and I, with violent start,
woke up, as one by force aroused.
Standing erect, around I turned
my rested eyes, with earnest gaze, 5
to see the place wherein I stood.
And, truly, on the brink was I of that
first vale, midst which descends the dread abyss,
where countless groans a tempest make.
So clouded, so obscure and deep it was, 10
that tho' I strained my sight,
nothing within could I discern.
"To that blind world we now descend,"
pale cheeked, the Poet said.
"I first, and thou close after me." 15
Then I, who marked his colour change,
exclaimed: "Can I advance when thou dost quail,
thou who alone my faltering spirit comfortest?"
And he: "The anguish of the souls below
doth tinge my cheeks with pity's hue, 20

which thou mistak'st for fear.
But let us go: the way is long."
Therewith he led me o'er the verge
of that first circle which ingirds the Pit.
There I could hear no plaints, 25
but sighs, which unto that eternal air
a tremulous motion gave.
No tortures caused them, but the simple grief
of an assemblage vast
of women, babes, and men. 30
"Dost not inquire," the Master asked,
"what spirits are before thee now?
'Tis fit thou know, ere we proceed,
they are not here through sin. Good they might be,
but good in vain, since not baptised 35
into that faith which thou dost hold.
They lived before the gospel times,
and to false deities their worship paid.
"And I myself am one of these.
For that defect alone our place is here; 40
but we no suffering have save this,
that, hopeless, in desire we live."
Great grief oppressed me, when I understood;
for worthy souls I knew
must be in that sad Limbo held. 45

Then I, assurance seeking of that faith
which every error doth subdue, spake thus:
"Tell me my Guide, my Master say,
Hath any hence gone forth, who by his own
or other's merit unto bliss attained?" 50
And he, who understood my meaning well,
replied: "New to this place was I
when here arrived a Mighty One,
whose brow was by a victor's wreath entwined.
The shade of our first parent led he forth, 55
with that of Abel, and of Noah old;
of Moses who received the laws;
obedient Abraham, and David, king;
Israel, with his sire and sons,
and Rachel, she for whom he served so long; 60
and these, with many more, he sanctified.
Before them, I would have thee mark,
No human soul was saved."
We ceased not going while he talked;
and through the moving wood we past, 65
the wood, I mean, of crowded souls.
Not far had we therein advanced
down from the height, when I perceived a flame,
which through the hemisphere of darkness shone.
While still from it some distance off, 70

I could in part discern that there
an honourable band was placed.
"O thou, to every art and science dear,
say who are these distinguished thus,
and from the multitude removed?" 75
"Their high renown," he said,
"up in that life of thine,
from Heaven's grace this favour wins."
His ceased, and then another voice I heard:
"Honour the Bard sublime, 80
whose shade that left us now returns."
Then there was silence, and I saw
four noble shades approach,
who were in look nor sorrowful nor glad.
Aside to me, the Master said: 85
"Mark him who cometh sword in hand,
and who, as sire, before the others walks.
Homer he is, the sovereign bard.
Satiric Horace moveth next.
Ovid is third, and Lucan last. 90
"To each with me that name belongs
the voice proclaimed, and therefore they
did honour me, and rightly too."
So I beheld the noble school
of him, the master of sublimest song, 95
who eagle-like above all others soars.

Together they conversed a while;
then turned to me with salutation kind,
which from my Guide a smile of pleasure drew.
And more than this they honoured me: 100
they made me of their band,
and I was counted sixth amid such lofty souls.
Then towards the light we moved along,
talking of things well left in silence now,
though they befitted much that place and time. 105
Soon to a lordly castle we drew near,
which by high walls was seven times begirt,
and circled by a limped stream,
which like firm ground our steps received.
Through seven gates I and those sages past, 110
and reached at length a verdant mead,
where there were people grave and placid eyed,
and who appeared of great authority:
Few were their words but silver toned.
Thence we unto one side withdrew, 115
into a place high, wide and luminous,
whence we could view the whole.
Upon the green enamelled lawn,
to me great spirits were made known,
whom to have viewed doth raise me in mine own
esteem. 120

I saw Electra, 'mid a gracious company,
in which I Hector and Eneas knew,
with Cæsar, armed and falcon eyed.
Penthésilia and Camilla were
beyond, with king Latinus, who 125
beside his child Lavinia sat.
I saw that Brutus who the Tarquin chased;
Lucretia, Julia, Marcia, and Cornelia too;
and Saladin, who stood apart, alone.
Then, glancing to a higher range, 130
lo, Aristotle, master of the sapient, who
sat high amidst his philosophic family.
All him admired, to him their homage paid.
Plato and Socrates
in rank to him the next appeared. 135
Democritus, that grave materialist,
Thales, Diogenes and Anaxagoras,
with Heraclitus, Zeno and Empedocles,
were there, with that good herbalist,
wise Dioscorides. Sweet Orpheus too, 140
Livy and Cicero, with moral Seneca,
Euclid and Ptolemy,
Galenus, Avicen, Hippocrates,
and he who wrote the comment huge, Averrois.
I cannot treat in full of all assembled there, 145

for my long theme enforces brevity, and oft
my words must fail to show the thing described.—
The company of six is now to two reduced.
Another way my learned Guide doth lead,
back from the calm into the troubled air, 150
where no such spirits light the land obscure.

CANTO V.

THUS from the highest circle we went down
into the second, which a smaller space contains,
but greater woes, that bitter cries enforce.
With ghastly grin, horrific Minos stands,
and tries each sinner as he steps within; 5
judges, and with his tail the verdict marks.
For when the ill-born spirit comes
before him, it confession makes,
and that sin-searcher sees
what circle of Inferno doth its case befit, 10
and with his tail he girds himself as oft
as it degrees must in the pit descend.
His court is ever full:
Each soul in turn to judgment goes,
confesses, hears, and then is whirled below. 15
"O thou who com'st to this asylum of pain,"
perceiving me, great Minos cried,
a moment pausing in his dread employ.
"beware of entering, and in whom thou dost confide;
nor by the spacious entrance be deceived." 20

"Why frettest thus?" my Guide replied,
"His destined way thou must allow:
Thus it is willed where can be done
the thing desired. Demand no more."
And now begin the doleful notes 25
to gather force, and I am come
where countless moans mine ears assail.
No sun-beams sing in that dark air,
which harshly bellows like the sea when tempest tost,
and battling with conflicting winds. 30
Ceaselessly raging, the infernal gale
with fury sweeps the souls along,
tossing and lashing them most savagely,
till, when against the rugged bounds they're dashed,
the wailings, groans and shrieks redoubled rise, 35
in curses of the Power Divine.
To such sad torments are
the carnal damned,
in whom low appetite doth over mind prevail.
Like starlings on their pinions borne 40
before the winter blast in flocks immense,
by wind those evil souls are here and there,
and up and down amid the darkness whirled.
No hope relieveth them:
no hope of rest, nor yet of lesser pain. 45

And as the cranes, chanting their rueful song,
stretch through the sky in lengthened train,
so, uttering still their loud laments,
rent streaks of shadows on the tempest come.
Then cried I: "Master, say who are these souls
thus by the inky air chastised."
"The first of these,"
my Guide replied,
"o'er many tongues an empress reigned.
So spoiled was she by vicious lusts, 55
excess she sanctioned by her statute laws,
to clear the blame she on herself had brought.
Semiramis she is: of whom we read,
that, Ninus' widow, she the empire seized,
and held the land which now the Sultans rule. 60
"The next is Dido, who, love frenzied, slew herself,
and to her spouse, Sichæus' ashes proved untrue.
Luxurious Cleopatra glows behind."
Helen I saw, for whom so many years
of toil were spent; and great Achilles too, 65
who fell in fighting for his loved Polyxæna.
Paris and Tristram, and a thousand more
were there, and by my Master shewn and named
as those whom love had of our life despoiled.
When I had heard my Teacher thus recite 70

that mighty list of olden dames and cavaliers,
I pined through pity, and bewildered stood.
At last I spoke: "O Poet, willingly
would I converse with that linked pair,
who, as they come, so light upon the gale appear." 75
Straight he replied: "Watch their approach,
and when they're nigh enough, entreat them by
that love which knits them here, and they will come."
Soon as the wind to us inclined their course,
I raised my voice: "O grieving souls, 80
stay ye and speak with us, if none forbid."
As doves, when love recalleth them
to their sweet nest, on spread and steady wings
glide thro' the air, as tho' pure longing bore them on,
so issued those swift shades from Dido's band, 85
and, through the air malign, swept down to us;
so much impassioned was my loving call.
"O living creature, gracious, mild,
who through the lurid air hast come to visit us
by whom the earth with our hearts' blood was stained,
were He, the universe's King our friend,
we should entreat his peace for thee,
since thou dost pity so our lot perverse.
"Of what most pleaseth thee

gladly will we converse, 95
while silent is the wind as now:
"Sitteth the town where I was born,
upon the shore where Po descends
to rest with all his tribute streams.
"Love, which so quickly takes the gentle heart,
took him beside me by that gracious form, of which
I was bereft by means whereat I shudder still.
Love, that to none beloved remits return of love,
drew me by his seductive lovingness,
and, as thou seest, I still by it am thralled. 105
Love to one death conducted us;—
Cain's pit awaiteth him whose dagger spilt our life."
Thus of those shades the fairer spake.
When I had heard their touching tale,
I bent, and, in my sorrow, drooped so long, 110
the Poet cried, at last: "What ponderest thou?"
"Ah me!" I then replied,
"what tender thoughts and ardours those
that led them to this mournful pass!"
Then unto them I looked, and said: 115
"Francisca, thy affliction sore,
with pain and sorrow, makes me weep.
O tell me: in the season of sweet sighs,

by what and how did Love reveal
to you your mutual, unconfessed desires?" 120
And she: "No grief is greater than
the memory of blissful days
in sorrow's hour—as well thy Master knows;
but if thou dost desire to hear how first
the germ of our young love its life disclosed, 125
I, e'en in weeping, will the story tell.
"One day we read for our delight of Lancelot
and Guinevere: how they by love were ta'en.
"Alone we were, without distrust.
Oft o'er the page our eyes suspended hung, 130
and our close cheeks grew pale.
But at one part alone we were quite overcome:
When we read how the smile, so long desired,
was kissed by one so deep in love,
he, who from me shall ne'er divided be, 135
my lips, all trembling, kissed.—
"The book was unto us a Galehaut.
That day we read no more."
While thus one of those spirits spake,
the other wept so sore that I, through pity faint, 140
enervate drooped, as if about to die,
and fell, as a dead body falls.

CANTO VI.

REVIVED the mental life that failed
when pity for that kindred pair
with grief my wonted powers subdued,
new torments, new tormented souls
around I see, each way I move, 5
each way I turn and gaze, for I
in the third circle am: that of the showers
ceaseless, accurs'd, heavy and cold,
ever in course and quality the same:
hailstones and snow with turbid water blent, 10
pouring forever through the midnight gloom:
whence putrid smells the soaking ground emits.
Cerberus, monster strange and fierce,
barks doglike with his triple throat
over the spirits in the swamp immersed. 15
His eyes are red; gory and black his beard;
his belly huge, and clawed his horny hands.
Clutching the souls, he skins and quarters them.
Beneath the blasting rain like curs they howl,

and, turning, try now this side and now that to shield.
Thus roar and toss those wretched souls profane.
Observing us, that serpent Cerberus,
now gnashed his triple jaws, and bared his horrid fangs,
while quivering passion shook his widely wringled frame.
Thereat my guide stooped down, 25
and both hands filled with earth,
which he into those greedy gullets flung.
Then as a dog, which howls in hunger,
stops, when 'tween his teeth he gets a bone,
being all intent to glut his famished maw, 30
so pacified were those foul gorges of
demoniac Cerberus; who's wont to stun the souls
with thund'rous lowings, till they'd fain be deaf.
Now o'er the shades down driven by the rain,
we past, and, as we stept, my feet went through 35
their empty forms, which perfect bodies seemed.
All on the earth extended lay
save one, who raised himself, and sat upright,
as soon as he perceived us come.
"O thou through this Inferno led," 40
he cried, "see if thou canst my person know;
for thou wast made before unmade was I."
"Perchance the traces thy keen anguish leaves
upon thy face," I said, "defeat my memory;

for I, methinks, beheld thee ne'er before. 45
Who art thou, say, so sadly placed,
and subject to such punishment,
which if not greatest, yet doth most disgust."

"Thy city which," he said, "of envy is so full
that now the measure overflows, 50
was mine when I enjoyed the life serene.
Ciacco I by ye citizens was called.
For my most baneful sin of gluttony,
I, as thou seest, am in these torrents bruised.
And I, unhappy soul, am not alone, 55
for those around like punishment
for like offences bear."

I answered: "Ciacco, thy distress
so weighs on me, it well nigh makes me weep.

"But, if thou canst, say what will now befall 60
that factious city's citizens;
say if a just one dwells in it; and why
it is by rampant discord torn."

"After a long contention," said that shade,
"blood will be drawn, and then the woodland clique, 65
with violence, will the rest expel.

"But ere three springs have bloomed and gone,
the beaten shall arise, and conquer in their turn,
aided by him who now steereth a tacking course.

Mighty their front shall be for many evil days, 70
and heavy burdens shall the other party bear,
groan tho' it may with lamentations sore.
"Two citizens are just, but none will hear their cry.
Envy, and pride, and avarice, are still
the sparks that set all hearts on fire." 75
That said, his sobbing voice expired.
Then I: "I pray thee to instruct me more,
and further speech to deign.
"Of Farinata, and of Aldobrandi good,
of Rusticucci, Mosca, with Arrígo and the rest, 80
who spent their talents for the people's weal,
the destiny relate, their present shape describe;
for urgent is my wish to know if they
of Heaven's sweetness drink or of Inferno's bitter cup."
And he: "They are among the blacker shades. 85
By divers sins they to a lower sphere are sunk,
as thou wilt see, shouldst thou so far descend.
"But, Sir, when to the sweet earth thou return,
among my comrades let my name revive.
I say no more to thee: no further answers make." 90
His eye-balls stiff he turned askance,
a moment leered on me, then bent his weary head,
and fell beside the others groping in the mire.
"Ne'er shall he rise again," the Master said,

"until th' Angelic trumpet blow, 95
and comes the Power at enmity with these.
Each soul shall then his dreary grave explore,
resume his flesh and form,
and hear proclaimed his everlasting doom."
So past we through the blended filth 100
of shadows and of mire, slow pacing on,
talking a little of the future life—
whereof I asked: "Shall these afflictions be
increased or softened, or the same remain
after the judgment's given?" 105
"Recall," he said, "thy science, which declares
the more a being to perfection grows
the keener is its sense of pleasure and of pain.
Now, tho' these spirits so accurst
shall not approach the perfect race, 110
they shall be less unlike it than they are."
We compassed now that dreary strand,
discoursing of such mysteries,
and reached, at last, a downward path,
where man's great enemy, old Plutus, we beheld. 115

CANTO VII.

" Ho Satan, look ye Satan, chieftain here !"
hoarse Plutus roared, with marv'ling scowl.
My gentle Sage, by nothing e'er surprised,
then said to comfort me : " Be not dismayed,
however great his power may be, 5
he cannot on this steep thy downward way arrest."
Then turning to that fuming face,
he cried : " Silence thou wolf accurst !
By thy wild frenzy be thyself consumed.
Not causeless is our journey down, 10
for sanctioned 'tis above, where Michael's sword
took vengeance on thy haughty rebel chief."
Then as broad sails, swelling before the breeze,
collapse and fall when breaks the mast,
so fell that savage, flaccid on the ground ; 15
and, undisturbed, we to the fourth gulf moved :
advancing down that dismal shore
which all the sinners of the universe confines.
Ah, Justice high ! inventest thou
those pains and tortures new which I beheld ? 20
Why do ill deeds such agonies entail ?

As waves on rocky shored Charybdis turn,
and, meeting other waves, in conflict break,
so, hurling at each other, ran the people here.
Such multitudes not heretofore I'd seen. 25
From each side to the other, howling all the while,
they, with their chests rolled metal heaps along;
and in opposing ranks together clashed;
then, in confusion, dragged their burdens round,
shouting: "Off miser," "Keep it spendthrift fool." 30
Thence back along the strand obscure,
those laden bands in opposite directions rushed,
still keeping up their scornful cries,
till, half the circuit made, hurtling they met again,
again the demi-circle ran, and jousted as before. 35
Then I, whose heart with pity groaned,
cried: "Master dear, reveal I pray,
who in this rabble are; if those indeed were priests,
the tonsured shades upon our left."
And he: "The minds of these in their first life 40
were so perverse they in the use of wealth
no measure could observe.
This by their cries is clearly shown,
when at the circle's poles they chaff
as clash the damnable extremes. 45
"Priests truly were the shaven crowned,

and even popes and cardinals, in whom
excess of avarice the highest pitch attains."
"Of these, O Master," I replied,
"some surely I should recognise 50
notorious for that vice."
"Vain is thy hope," he said.
"Inglorious lives above
make them obscure below.
"They are to ceaseless rounds of buttings doomed.
This set shall from the grave arise
with griping fists, and that with wasted hair.
Ill-spending and ill-keeping from the beauteous world
degradeth them to this most lamentable strife,
no coloured words of mine are needed to depict. 60
"Now canst thou well consider, son,
the vanity of all the goods that fortune can bestow,
the folly of the greedy souls who battle for them still;
for all the goods and all the gold beneath the golden
moon,
and all the wealth of every age no moment's pause
could buy 65
for any of the weary souls that thou beholdest there."
Then I: "O Master, tell me now
of whom thou speakest so—who Fortune is,
whose fingers clutch and strew the world's wealth."

"O creatures dull and blind," he cried, 70
"what ignorance afflicts ye still!
Thy ear and memory my lesson now receive:
"He who transcends in wisdom all,
the spheres celestial made, and o'er them set a power,
that each might on the others shine, 75
and light in equal distribution spread.
"Thus too, o'er earthly splendours He
a minister and chief ordained,
the world's vanities with timely hand to change
from people unto people, red blood unto black, 80
despite of all that men with grasping greed can do.
Hence empire unto this and servitude to that,
as Fortune doth decree:
whose occult will is hid as snakes are in the grass.
Your vaunted knowledge she eludes. 85
Foreknowing, she decides; and doth uphold her rule,
like other princes, each in his domain.
"Her permutations never cease;
necessity impels her on,
so oft new claimants rise her benefits to share. 90
"Such is that Fortune so reviled,
so violently abused by some
who owe her rather thanks and praise:
But in her strength serene, what is abuse to her!

With other primal creatures glad, 95
she rolleth on her sphere, exulteth in her bliss!
"Now lower in Inferno seek we sadder bourns.
Already set those stars which o'er the wood arose
when we set out, and here forbidden 'tis to stay."
Then to its inner edge the circle we traversed, 100
and neared a spring, which, boiling, poured
into a channel cloven in the rock,
a purple-black and foaming stream.
Beside this turbid and impatient flood,
we, by a strange wild way, descended to the plain, 105
where in a mashy lake, the Stygian named,
the sable water spreads soon as it finds the base
of that grey coast of crags malign.
Arrested there, I gazed around,
and saw a miry people struggling in the bog. 110
Naked were all, and wrathful eyed.
Fiercely they fought; and not with hands alone,
but equally with head and chest and feet;
while with their teeth they tore each other's skin.
Then my good master said: "Behold the souls 115
of those who were by violent passions swayed.
"'Tis fitting thou shouldst also know,
that others 'neath the waters crawl,

who, sighing, make the bubblings there,
where from the fighting ones the lake is free. 120

"Sunk in the slime they moan: 'Sullen we were
when living in the balmy air that joyeth in the sun;
now in our hearts we sluggish fumes must hold,
and in this filthy tank our sullen moods repeat.'

"Slow gurgled in their gullets this, 125
for foul throats cannot utter pleasant sounds."

Then skirted we that livid pool,
wide circuit making near the rocky bounds,
while shuddering at the spirits gulping in the mud;
until upon the strand unto a tower we came. 130

CANTO VIII.

BUT ere we stood
quite at that lofty turret's base,
our eyes unto its top were drawn
by two bright flames which flickered there;
and then we saw an answering flash, 5
afar, almost beyond our vision's range.
Unto my sea of knowledge turned,
I asked: "What signal these; what answer made
the other light; and who this converse hold?"
"Upon the tainted lake," my Guide replied, 10
"thou mayest discern that now awaited here,
unless the marsh's vapours blind thy sight."
Never was arrow by the cord impelled,
that on its course more nimbly sped,
than, straight to us, a slender bark, 15
which o'er the flood approached us then
in charge of but a single boatman, who
shouted: "Now art thou come, O spirit fell!"
"Ah, Flegias, Flegias, vain thy glee,

this time at least," my ready Lord returned. 20
"Thine are we only till the swamp is crost."
As one who finds himself defrauded of his due,
and inwardly bewails his lot,
so, with pent rage did Flegias pale.
Then stept my Guide into the skiff, 25
and helped me after him with steadying hand;
and only through my weight less buoyant it appeared.
Soon as we were embarked,
speeded the ancient prow—deeper immersed
than e'er when spirits were its only freight. 30
So were we passing o'er the stagnant ditch,
when broke its surface, and a miry shade stood up,
growling: "Who comes in flesh, and ere his hour?"
"I come, but not to stay," I answered him.
"But who art thou, that wallowest thus?" 35
"A soul aggrieved, as thou mayest see," he said.
"In grief and foulness still remain,
thou spirit most detestible!" I cried,
"for, even thus besmeared, thy face I know."
Then griped he at the boat with both his hands; 40
but my so watchful Leader thrust him back,
exclaiming: "Down unto thy brother dogs!"
then turned, and threw his arms about my neck,
and kissed my cheeks, and cried: "Indignant soul,

most blest was she who gave thee birth! 45
Arrogant in the world that sinner was;
ungraced his memory by one bounteous act;
therefore by passion is his shade consumed.—
How many on the earth as princes stalk,
who here like swine shall welter in the slough, 50
leaving behind them execrations dire!"

Then I: "That sinner I would gladly see
plunged deeply in the nauseous mess,
ere we be from the lake removed."

"Before the other shore appear, 5
thou shalt be satisfied," he said,
"so laudable is thy desire."

Forthwith I saw the scoundrel clutched
so fiercely by the mud grimmed crew,
that still with thankfulness I think of it. 60

"Philip Argenti, ha!" they yelled,
while that most rabid Florentine
turned on himself his spiteful teeth.—
We left him thus: of him I speak no more.

Now other lamentations struck mine ear, 65
and through the gloom I strained my sight.

Then my good Master said:
"Lo, now, my son, the town named Dis is nigh,
with its sin-laden citizens, a throng immense."

And I: "E'en now its mosques appear 70
on yonder shore, all fiery red,
as if they in a furnace glowed."
"Yea," answered he, "eternal fire,
which burns within, that ruddy hue imparts,
and fits them for this depth of Hell." 75
Soon we attained the moat profound
which compasseth that woeful place.
Of iron seemed its bounding walls.
Wide circuit made we ere
a port was reached, where loud our pilot cried: 80
"Now get ye gone—the gate is here."
Perched on the walls a thousand shades—
souls cast of old from Heaven—who cried in wrath:
"Who thus, by death unchartered, dares
to journey through the regions of the dead?" 85
To these my learned Master signed
that he some private parley wished,
whereat they somewhat quelled their scornful rage,
and said: "Alone come in. Let him depart,
whose hardy steps have ventured here. 90
Unaided, he shall turn upon his foolish way—
retrace it if he can; for here must thou remain,
who through the land obscure hast guided him."
Fancy, O Reader, my discomfiture

at these ill-omened words! 95
Truly I feared I never should return.
"O Guardian dear, who seven times hast
my refuge been, and savèd me
from direst foes that stopt my way,
leave me not thus," I cried, "so quite undone; 100
and if to travel farther be denied,
quickly together let us hurry back."
That patient Lord, my Guide, replied:
"Fear not, none can our progress stay,
so mighty He who sanctions it. 105
Wait for me here; and let thy weary soul
be comforted, and fed by lively hope
that in this nether world I leave thee not."
Now wends he up, and I,
the gentle Father gone, in doubt remain, 110
by hope and fear alternate swayed.
I heard not what persuasions he employed,
but short time he had stood with them,
when those fell spirits turned, and raced within,
then rudely dashed the gate 115
right in my Master's face.
Slowly to me he came again:
eyes on the ground, and from his brows quite shorn

their aspect brave. Sadly he sighed:
"Who bars my way into the mournful town?" 120
Then unto me he said: "Tho' I be troubled now,
be not dismayed; I shall prevail,
no matter what defences they devise.
Ere this they have like insolence displayed;
for once they showed it at a wider gate, 125
which to this day unbarred remains:
O'er it thou didst the woeful scroll peruse.
"Lo now, one, entered there, descends the Pit,
and, unescorted, through the circles comes.
One to whose hand these gates will yield." 130

CANTO IX.

THE pallor of my face
when I beheld my Guide repelled,
made him restrain his own unwonted dread.
He paused, as one intent to hear;
for little way his anxious eye could range 5
through the dark air and heavy clouds.
"Be sure this battle we shall win," he said.
"If not . . . nay, by the proffered aid . . .
Yet ages seem to pass while he doth come!"
Full well I saw he fain would cloak 10
the doubts his low "if not" betrayed,
for his last words scarce with his first agreed;
and more this mending of his speech
did frighten me, suggesting fears
of worse, perchance, than he conceived. 15
"From that first circle, where the loss of hope
is all the punishment, are any wont to come
so far within Inferno's dismal shell?"
I asked.
"Rarely, indeed," he straight replied, 20

"this journey is by any of us made,
yet once before, I came below,
conjured by fell Erictho, who
to bodies called their spirits back.
"Newly divested of the flesh was I 25
when sent by her within that wall,
a soul to draw from Judas' cell,
which is the lowest, most obscure,
farthest from Heaven's incircling orbs.—
The road I know, so rest assured. 30
"This foul breathed marsh
surrounds the city dolorous,
which save with strife it seems we enter not."
Still more the Master said;
but wholly then was my attention fixed 35
upon the summits of the glowing towers,
where, suddenly, up-sprang
three hellish furies, stained with blood,
who female were in gesture and in shape.
With greenest hydras they were girt; 40
serpents and hornèd snakes they had for hair;
and wriggled these around their horrid brows.
Then he, who recognized
the drudges of the Queen of endless woe,
exclaimed: "Observe the fierce Erinnyes there. 45

That is Megæra on the left;
Alecto on the right doth wail;
Tisiphone's between."
Each with her nails her bosom tore,
and beat her palms, and shrieked so loudly that 50
I, in alarm, clung to the Master's side.
"Medusa come that we may turn him into stone,"
they cried, with fiery glances down.
"His rashness springs from Theseus' ill-avenged assault."
"Quick turn, and keep thy face concealed, 55
for shouldst thou on the Gorgon look,
no more couldst thou the upper world regain."
Thus warned my Guide, who then himself
wheeled me about, and, trusting not my hands,
more closely with his own my vision screened. 60
O ye of sound intelligence,
mark well the truth that hidden lies
beneath the veil of this my mystic song.
Now came there o'er the turbid wave
an awful noise of uproar wild, 65
which shook the shore on either side:
a sound like that of wind,
impetuous through opposing heats,
that makes wild havoc in autumnal woods,

crushing and crashing, bearing off the boughs; 70
and then, in dusty columns, proudly goes,
scaring the beasts and shepherd lads.

At this he freed my eyes, and said:
"Now look across yon ancient foam,
where flies the spray with wildest blurts." 75

As frogs before their deadly foe
the water-snake, splash through the pond,
and squatting in the mud conceal themselves,
so then a thousand ruined souls, I saw,
scud on, and wildly plunge 'fore one 80
who dry-soled passed the Stygian sound.

The gross air from his face
with his left hand he waved,
and only this his placid speed disturbed.

I well perceived that he an Angel was, 85
and, turning, saw the Master sign
that I should low in silent reverence bend.

Ah, how indignant seemed the stranger's air!
Straight to the gate he went, and, at the touch
of his light wand, it, undefended, opened wide. 90

"Outcasts of Heaven! degraded race!"
he on that threshold dread began,
"Whence have ye this wild arrogance?
Why restive thus against the will

which never curb in vain applied, 95
and often ye with sharper lash has cut?
What profits it 'gainst fate to fling?
Think how your Cerberus, for violence still
the quick flesh on his gullet shows."
This said, he past along the miry shore, 100
deigning no word to us, but seeming like
a man too pressed by other cares to spend
a second thought on those already served.
Encouraged by his words of might,
forthwith we marched unto the town, 105
and entered unopposed.
And I, who longed to see the state of things
within a fortress by such jealousy secured,
cast eager glances round,
and saw, on every side, a spacious plain 110
replete with woes, and torments dire.
Like as at Arles, where the Rhone is slow,
or as at Pola, near Quarnaro's bay,
which hems Italia and her margin laves,
by ancient burials is the land uneven made, 115
so here by tombs the ground was broken up,
while horror to disorder lent her touches grim;
for 'mong those gravestones sprouted flames,

which brought them to a fiercer heat
than iron is in founderies. 120

Of all those tombs the lids were raised,
and from within came piercing cries,
which proved the wretchedness they held.

Then I: "O Master, say whom now we hear,
who buried in these awful coffers lie, 125
and fill the air with such distressing sounds."

And he: "Arch-heretics are there, with all
their followers of every sect; and more
the sepulchres contain than thou wouldst deem.
Like swarms with like, sectarian still. 130
Each kindred mass is scorched to its deserved
degree."

He ended, and we journeyed by the right,
going between the tortures and the ramparts high.

CANTO X.

ALONG a narrow path,
between the sufferers and the city wall,
the master moved, and I behind him kept.
"O Lofty Virtue, through the cruel rounds
leading me on, as seemeth good to thee, 5
speak now and slake my mental thirst.
"Those lying in the tombs,
could they be seen? Already all the lids
are lifted up; and I no guard perceive."
"All will be closed when from Jehoshaphat, 10
after the judgment, they return," he said,
"bringing the bodies they have left above.
"On this side lie the shades
of Epicurus and his pupils, who
say death doth with the body kill the soul; 15
and here thy question shall
quick answer have,
and thine unspoken wish be granted too."
Then I: "Good Guide, I do not keep from thee

my heart's desire, save through economy 20
in use of words, which thou hast taught."
"O Tuscan, through this fiery town
holding thy course alive, and so discreet in speech,
may't please thee here to rest awhile.
"Plainly thine accent proves 25
thee of that noble land
with which, perchance, I too ungently dealt."
Suddenly came these words
forth from a vault, and, trembling, I
still nearer to the Master stept. 30
"Nay look," he said, "Why shrink?
Lo Farinata, there erect;
from cincture up exposed to view."
At once I on that spirit fixed mine eyes.
With chest expanded, and with haughty brow, 35
as if Inferno's pains were scorned, he rose.
And now the Master's prompt and active hand
impelled me through the vaults to him,
while thus he cautioned me: "Clearly thyself express."
Soon as I stood beside the tomb, 40
the shadow scanned my face; then, with disdain,
inquired: "Who were thine ancestors?"
And I, most anxious to obey,
nothing concealed, but named them all.

Thereat he, thinking, raised his brows, 45
then said: "Fiercely adverse were they
to me, my race, and party too;
and from our Florence I dispersed them twice."
"If banished, they from every side
each time returned," I quick replied: 50
"an art thy friends have failed to learn."
Just then another shadow rose to view:
his face uncovered to the chin.
Upon his knees I think he was.
Round me he looked, as if he hoped 55
another might have come with me;
then, seeing none, he, disappointed, wept,
and sighed: "If through this prison blind
thou by clear-sighted genius wend,
where is my son: why not with thee?" 60
Then I: "Not of myself I come,
but he who waiteth there disclosed the way:
Him for a guide thy Guido had perchance disdained."
The shadow's speech, and his appropriate doom,
had made me guess his name, 65
whence that so apt reply.
With rapid spring erect, he cried:
"How 'had' didst say? No longer lives he then?
No more upon his eyes the sweet light beams?"

Deceived by some delay, 70
which I, ere answering, made,
supine he sank and rose no more.
Meanwhile that other lofty soul, at whose
desire I'd stayed, his aspect had not changed,
nor had he bent his haughty neck. 75
"And if," referring to my pert remark, he said,
"my kindred have not learnt to win their own again,
more grieved am I thereat than by this fiery bed.
But not yet fifty times shall Prosperine,
who reigneth here, her pallid face relume 80
e'er thou shalt know the hardness of that art.
"Now, by thy wish once more
the pleasant earth to see, tell why thy people so severe
in all their laws against my party are."
"Remembrance of the rout," I answered him, 85
"and of the slaughter which the Arbia dyed,
doth cause those edicts in our temples still."
At this he, sighing, shook his head, and said:
"In that affray not I alone did fight;
and not without just cause I with the others moved.
But I alone stood forth dissentient when
our Florence was by all unto destruction doomed;
'twas I who openly forbade the deed."
"Ah, may for that thy seed yet find repose!"

I cried, then added: "Kindly loose for me this knot,
which doth my judgment much perplex:
You spirits seem to have prevision of
things unevolved by time, yet Cavalcante is
unwitting of his Guido's actual state."
"Like aged eyes," he said, "we can discern 100
the things that are remote;
so much of light the Ruler High allows;
but those at hand or happ'ning no impression make
upon our faculties; and, but for new arrivals here,
we of the state you're in no knowledge should possess.
So mayest thou comprehend that altogether dead
shall our intelligence at last become,
when of futurity the gate by dying time is shut."
Then, with compunction for my tardiness,
I cried: "O, I beseech thee, let that fallen spirit know
his son young Guido is yet on the earth alive.
And, if I was untimely mute when he inquired,
explain that I was pondering then
the doubts just solved by thee."
My waiting Guide now called me back, 115
and I had barely time to urge that soul
to tell who were with him condemned to burn.
"More than a thousand suffer here," he said.

"The Emperor Frederick II. dwells with us;
the potent Cardinal—the rest I do not name." 120

Therewith he vanished. To the Ancient Bard
I then returned, revolving much what that
sad spirit said I should ere fifty months endure.

Then, as he moved, to me absorbed in thought,
the Poet said: "Whence so confused thine air?" 125
and, frankly, I confession made.

"Safe in thy memory store his words
importing ill to thee," my Sage enjoined.
"And mark," here went his warning finger up,
"when thou shalt come before the gracious glance 130
of Beatrice, whose eye discerneth all,
the future of thy life by her shall be disclosed."

Unto the left his steps were now;
and from the wall we tended to the central space,
along a path which struck into a valley, whence, 135
e'en up to us, a noisome vapour came.

CANTO XI.

UPON the margin of a lofty bank,
composed of broken rocks, ranged in a circle wide,
above a yet more tortured crowd we stood.
And here the dire excess of loathsome fumes,
that from the deep abyss arose, 5
made us withdraw behind an arching roof,
which closed a massive tomb, whereon I read:
"Pope Anastasius I contain:
he whom Photinus from the straight way drew."
"Slowly must we proceed, 10
till somewhat used our sense become
to this foul air, and it shall cease to plague."
The Master thus; then I: "Lest time be lost,
shall we some compensating converse hold?"
"That I intend," he straight replied; then said: 15
"My son, within these boundary stones
three minor circles sink
stepwise, like those traversed by thee above.
With souls accurst they all are filled,

and that of these the sight, as we pass through, suffice,
hark how and why they there imprisoned are:
"Of each malicious act by Heaven abhorred
the end is injury; and this result,
come it through force or fraud, is grief to some.
Now fraud's a vice peculiar unto man, 25
and most just Heaven offends, thus lowest lie
the fraudulent, and them most pains assail.
"All the first circle's range is by the violent filled;
and as three persons may by force be wronged,
this circle of three belts is formed: 30
Violence is done to God, one's neighbour and one's self;
that is to them and what to them pertains,
as thou shalt hear in full explained.
To violent death and painful wounds
our neighbour is exposed; and equally his goods 35
to ruin, fire, and robbery.
So homicides, and those who strike malignantly,
with pillagers and spoilers, ranged in order just,
appropriate tortures in the highest belt endure.
Violent unto himself a man may be, 40
and his possessions much abuse; and so,
with unavailing moans, repent within the second belt
those who of your fair world deprive themselves;
who game away their means; who waste their faculties

or weep where they should gladsome be. 45
Against the Deity may violence too be done,
the heart denying and blaspheming Him,
or holding nature and her bounties cheap;
so keeps the third and smallest belt
under its seal both Sodom and Cahors,* 50
and all who slight the Godhead in their hearts.

"Fraud, that doth every conscience gnaw, a man may use towards those who trust in him, and towards the rest from whom he wins no special faith.
The latter mode doth seem to cut alone 55
the bond of social love which nature makes.
So in the second circle nestle close
witchcraft, hypocrisy, and flattery,
theft, falsehood, simony,
with pand'ring, swindling, and like purulence. 60

"But in the former mode forgotten is that love which nature makes, and also that which, added, seems to give good ground for confidence entire.
So in the smallest circle, next the central point
of all the universe, where reigneth Dis, 65
traitors eternally are racked."

"Most lucidly, O Master, thy discourse proceeds

* Cahors, a town famous in Dante's time for the number of its usurers.

sufficiently distinguishing
this ringed abyss, and those who dwell in it.
But tell me: those within the greasy marsh we saw,
those swept on by the wind, those beaten by the rain,
and those sharp-tongued who clashed with din,
why are they not all in the fiery city held,
and punished there, if Heaven be wroth with them?
And if it be not wroth, why suffer they at all?" 75

"How so much errs," replied my Guide,
"beyond its wont thy curious mind?
Of what dost dream?
Remembrest not the words
in which thy Ethics treat 80
of those three inclinations unapproved by Heaven:
incontinence and malice, with mad brutishness;
and how the first doth least offend,
and on itself less censure draws?
If thou this sentence wilt consider well, 85
and call to mind the names of those to penance doomed
within the rings outside the city walls,
clearly wilt thou perceive why from these fouler souls
they're kept apart, and why with less fierce wrath
Justice doth mete their torments out." 90

"O Sun of Song which lighteth darkened eyes,
so pleased am I when thou dost clear my doubts,

to doubt as sweet appears as perfectly to know.
A little back I pray thee turn to where
thou saidst that usury Celestial Love offends, 95
and make the reason plain."

"Philosophy," he said, "to him who studies it,
conclusively reveals
how nature's course is guided by the laws
Intelligence Divine hath fixedly decreed. 100
And reading well thy *Physics* plain it will appear,
ere many leaves thou turn, how Aristotle proves,
that human art, as much as in her lies,
doth follow nature, as the boy his master's hand;
so that your art is quasi-grandchild of the Deity. 105
By nature as by art, as thou hast read in Genesis,
behoves it man shall guided be,
that he retain his life, and still renew his kind.
Now, since the usurer doth work by other means,
disdains he nature in herself, and in her pupil too, 110
resting elsewhere his hope.

"But follow me again, for I will now descend.
Already swim the Fishes clear on the horizon gray.
The Wain o'er Caurus spreadeth wide;
and by this rocky bank we further depths explore."

CANTO XII.

PRECIPITOUS the coast where our descent began,
and there was that upon it too
which every eye would shudd'ringly avoid.
As is the landslip which, sunward of Trent,
into the Adige crashed, 5
from lack of prop, or by an earthquake torn—
e'en from the mountain summit, whence it broke,
unto the river's bank, so shattered is the precipice,
that one might from above a rugged pathway find—
such was the stony cataract that lay before us now; 10
and on its broken verge there sprawled
that infamy of Crete, the Minotaur,
which by the counterfeited heifer was conceived.
Beholding us, the creature gnawed himself
like one by rabid wrath possessed. 15
"Perchance," began to him my learned Guide,
"that Theseus, prince of Athens, seems to thee arrived,
through whom on earth death struck thee down.
"Avaunt, foul beast! he with me cometh not
instructed by thy sister, Ariadne fair; 20
but passeth here thy torment to survey."

E'en as a bull which snaps the halter ring,
when mortally the mallet strikes,
runneth not off, but blindly plunges here and there,
so plunged, with futile springs, the Minotaur. 25

Then cried my prudent Guide: "Haste to the pass,
and scramble down while his blind fury lasts."

So ventured I among the tumbled rocks,
which, as I went, did often shake and slip
beneath the novel weight of living flesh and blood. 30

Musing I picked my way, and this the Master saw:
"May-hap thou think'st," he said, "of our wild road,
and of its bestial guardian by my words distraught.
Know that when I was here before,
by base Erictho sent Inferno's depths to search, 35
this mountain side not yet had fallen thus.
If rightly I discern, on his approach
who out of Limbo's circle took
rich booty of pure souls from sovereign Dis,
the deep and awful vale so trembled that 40
the universe appeared through love of Him
throbbing at heart, as it had throbbed before,
when earth to chaos was reduced,
and then these ancient rocks asunder hurled,
while devastation wrought in circles yet remote. 45

"But yonder see, approaching in the vale,

the stream of blood in which all those are boiled,
who others by their violence hurt."
O blind cupidity! O foolish wrath!
which through life's brief career do spur us madly on
and in eternity our souls thus wretchedly ingulf!
I saw, beneath, an ample foss, which seemed
to gird the central vale, and form the upper belt
which my good Guide had taught me to expect.
Between it and our bank galloped in file 55
a troop of Centaurs, armed with bow and shaft,
as they were wont to be when hunting on the earth.
Perceiving our advance, they made a sudden pause,
while three diverged, approaching us,
with ready bows and well selected darts. 60
While yet afar, one cried: "What torment to endure
come ye who thus the coast traverse?
Reply from where ye are, or I the bow will bend."
To him the Master: "Our reply we give
to Chiron when we're near enough: 65
Thou ever hast bewailed thy sudden, rash desires!"
Then, touching me, explained: "Nissus is this,
who for Deïanera's sake of Hercules was slain,
and by his poisoned blood revenged himself when dead.
He in the middle ranked, and gazing at his breast, 70
is sapient Chiron, who Achilles' teacher was.

Ill-tempered Pholus at his side is curbed.
By thousands round the foss they go,
and shoot at scalded souls who stretch themselves
out of the bloody river higher than befits their sin." 75

As to those fleet-heeled brutes we now drew nigh,
we saw great Chiron with an arrow's notch
back on his cheek-bones part his heavy beard.
His wide-lipped mouth thus cleared, he to the rest
remarked: "Noted ye that 80
yon second soul stirreth the stones he treads?
Feet of the dead this are not wont to do."

At this my Leader, who beside that Ceutaur stood
just where the man and horse were joined,
replied: "Alive he is, and solitary too, 85
wherefore I guide him through the darksome pit.
A needful journey his, and not a pleasure jaunt.
From chanting hallelujahs She, the Fairest, came
who unto me this novel trust assigned.
No robber he, nor felon spirit I. 90
Now by the Virtue pure, at whose behest I pass
along this rugged way,
one of thy band appoint, whom we may trust,
to show us where the river shallows to a ford,
and who upon his back my friend will carry o'er: 95
no spirit he above the waves to trip!"

Then Chiron to his right wheeled round,
and unto Nissus said: "Return and lead,
and ward off any hostile troops."
Escorted thus, we safely moved along 100
the shore of that vermilion, seething flood,
wherein boiled spirits yelled in chorus shrill.
Up to the brows immersed were some:
"These," said our Centaur, "tyrants were,
in bloodshed and in plunder keen. 105
Here they deplore their pitiless decrees.
Great Alexander's here; and Dionysius fell,
who on Sicilia brought many a year of woe;
and yonder jetty hair doth Azzolino mark,
while these blond locks distinguish still 110
Obizzo d'Este, who, sooth to say,
was by his step-son choked."
Now turned I to the Bard, but he drew back:
"Let Nissus teach thee here, to him I yield," he said.
A little farther on the mighty Centaur stopt 115
before another tribe, whose heads were wholly raised
above the bubbling stream.
One, from the rest apart, he pointed to, and cried:
"By him was pierced before the holy altar cross
that heart still honoured on the Thames." 120
Then saw I other shades

who even to the waist the steaming wave escaped;
and many of the lot familiarly I knew.
Thus less and less in depth we found
that hot and gory bed, till only spirit's feet it hid 125
when we attained the ford.
"At this part of the circle, see,
more shallow is the sanguine ditch;"
thus Nissus spake; "so I would have thee note,
beyond this point it deeper grows again, 130
in passing round to join the place
where thou beheld'st the tyrants sunk—
where Heaven's justice vengeance takes
on Atilla, of earth a very scourge,
on Pyrrhus, and on Sextus; and eternal tears, 135
the ever boiling stream by scalding heat extracts
from Renier of Corneto, and the Renier Pazzo, who,
with bandit troops, warred on the public way."
The river crost, our Centaur guide returned.

CANTO XIII.

Ere Nissus had repast the ford,
already we were in a forest wild,
through which no path was traced.
Not fresh, but sickly lived the foliage there.
Not smooth the branches were, but gnarled and crooked.
Of apples there were none, but venomed thorns instead.
No brakes so rugged or so tangled find
those beasts that shun the cultured tracts
between Cecina and Corneto of the sea.
There nestle those foul harpies which 10
the Trojans from the Strophades expelled,
with dismal presages of woes to come.
Lank wings they have, and human neck and face;
clawed are their feet; their paunches featherèd;
rueful their wailings on the trees fantastical. 15

"Before we further go," Virgil began,
"know thou art in this circle's second belt,
and shalt be till we reach
the plains of torrid sand.

"And here look round, for surely thou wilt see 20
a confirmation of mine ancient lay."
Now doleful moans on every side I heard,
but none could see who uttered them;
and, therefore, stopt, bewildered quite.
I fancy he believed that I believed, 25
the many voices in the thicket came
from people scared by our approach.
Wherefore he said: "If thou wilt break
a single twig from any of these plants,
the error thou art in will speedily be shown." 30
Then put I forth my hand,
and from an aged thorn, I plucked a little shoot,
when, lo, the branch cried out: "Why wound
me so?"
Blood spouted from the end, and clotted it,
while shrieked the voice again: "O cruel bruise! 35
Hast thou no spark of pity left?
Men were we once tho' rooted bushes now;
and verily thy hand more gently should have touched
had we from serpents' souls transmuted been."
A green log burning at one end, 40
the other yieldeth sap,
and hisses as the wind bubbles through the drops;
so from this tree there dribbled out at once

both words and blood. Confounded utterly,
I threw the twig away, and shivered to the soles. 45
"Had he not been so sceptical
O wounded shade," the Bard exclaimed,
"concerning what is in my verses told,
never against thee had his hand been raised;
but so incredible the thing appeared, 50
I led him to the deed which now I heartily deplore.
"But tell him who thou art, that he,
as some amends, thy fame on earth refresh;
for thither he is licensed to return."
"Thy sweet words so entice me," said the torn bough,
"I cannot but comply; and let it not offend
if somewhat I enlarge in that I have to say.
"'Twas I who kept the keys
of Frederick's heart, and turned them so,
unlocking and then locking with such winning art, 60
that scarce another man its secrets could divine.
And such devotion I in my high task displayed,
my life through it was sacrificed.
That harlot, who from Cæsar's house
her greedy eye ne'er turned away, 65
she, constant bane and vice of courts,
'gainst me inflamed the servile crew,
and these, in turn, Augustus roused,

and my sweet honours were for bitter woes exchanged.
Filled with disdain, my haughty soul 70
sought then in death to shun disdain.
Thus I, the just, unjust was to myself.
"By this tree's tenderest sucking root,
to thee I swear that ne'er my faith did fail
unto my lord, to whom all honor was a righteous debt;
and if of you one should indeed to earth return,
let him defend me, for my credit prostrate lies
low through the blow by envy given."
The speaker paused; and then: "Since he hath stopt,"
the Poet said, "lose not the hour, 80
but up and ask if thou wouldst learn yet more."
"Do thou," I sighed, "demand, O gentle Guide,
what thou believ'st will please me most;
for through keen pity my sad mind's confused."
Then he: "That this yet living man may grant 85
with fulness what thou dost desire,
pray now relate, incarcerated soul,
how spirits in such knots are fixed;
and, if thou canst, also declare
if from these wooden limbs any have yet escaped." 90
At this the trunk breathed hard, and then
the whistling air into these words was formed:

"Briefly I answer thee:
When leaps the eager soul
forth from the frame which she in haste destroys, 95
unto the seventh circle Minos casts her down.
In this strange wood she falls,
and where by chance she 'lights
she germinates, sprouting like seed,
and grows a wilding such as this I am. 100
Harpies then browse upon her spreading leaves,
opening, with cruel teeth, vents for our anguish cries.
Like other souls we our forsaken spoils shall seek,
tho' none his earthly form resume;
for what a man discards should never be restored. 105
The grave-worn flesh dragged to this mournful wood,
upon the trees our bodies empty shall be hung
each on the thorn of its tormented shade."

Attentive we remained,
believing he had other things to say, 110
when we were startled by a tumult loud—
startled like one who hears,
suddenly in a wood, the boar hound's savage yelp,
the wild hog's grunt, the dry bough's crackling fall;
and, lo, forth from the leftward ran two sprites, 115
naked and torn, and, in their headlong haste,
smashing the thickets as they sped.

Of these the foremost cried: "Death, death, O come!"
while growled the other, lagging in the race:
"O Lano, not so active were thy legs 120
on Toppo's bloody field;"
and then, as tho' his breath were spent,
into a bush he sprang, and seemed a part of it.

Whence they had come, the forest roared
with dingy hounds, gaunt, fleet, and keen 125
as hungry harriers broken from the leash.

Him squatting down their greedy fangs detect;
they tear him into shreds,
and for the quivering morsels struggle as they run.

Then led me by the hand the Master brave, 130
unto that luckless bush. Through many bleeding breaks
it vain laments was pouring forth.

"O Jacopo da Sant' Andréa," mournfully it cried,
"what hast thou gained by making me thy shield?
For thy unholy life should I be punished thus?" 135

From Jacopo in shreds no vocal answer came.
Then said my Guide: "What name on earth hadst thou
whose rents breathe blood and pitiable complaints?"

"O spirits, just in time," answering, it moaned,
"to see the shameful outrage that 140
thus scatteredst my leaves,
collect and lay them down at this sad bush's root.

"The city which for John the Baptist changed
its early patron power my birth-place was.—
Much has the ireful god revenged that slight; 145
and did not Arno's bridge
of Mars some image yet display,
those citizens who built Florenzo o'er again,
on ashes left by Attila,
had laboured quite in vain. 150

"In my own house I hung myself."

CANTO XIV.

LOVE of my native land impelling me,
I gathered up the leaves, and to that ghostly tree
I gave them back, while its weird voice grew hoarse.
  Then came we to the forest's edge, when from
the circle's second to its third degree we past; 5
and there more dreadful arts of Justice saw.
  What I beheld to manifest,
I say, that we now reached a land,
which from its sterile bed all vegetation spurns.
  Encircled is it by the dol'rous wood, 10
as by the gory foss the wood is compassèd.
  Just on its verge we stopt.
A thick and arid sand lay over all the ground:
a sand like that which Cato trod
upon the Libyan plain. 15
  O Vengeance just, how much shouldst thou
be held in awe by all who hear described
what to mine eyes was now revealed!
  Thick o'er the plain were flocks of naked souls,
and every soul was weeping mis'rably: 20
tho' subject unto divers laws they seemed:

Prostrate upon the earth were some;
some into balls were curled up,
while ceaselessly the others roamed.
Full many were the restless ones, 25
and fewer those who rigidly their fated ordeal met,
tho' louder were their shrieks.
Slow on the sand
loose flakes of fire in showers were shed,
thickly as snow upon the Alps becalmed, 30
or as the flames great Alexander saw
in India's hottest east upon his legions light,
and flicker on the glowing earth,
where, prudently, he gave command
that all his troops should trample them, while yet 35
unmingled with the dust, they eas'ly could be quenched.
And, 'neath those burning and eternal showers,
full constant was the dance
of miserable hands
in whisking off the sparks, unceasingly replaced; 40
while, like to tinder when the flint is struck,
the sands ignited, doubling thus the torturings.
Then I: "O Master, thou who hast prevailed
o'er each opposing force, except the hardy demon crew,
who scornfully thy summons met on Dis's crimson gate,
what sturdy soul is that, who heedeth not the fire,

but with disdain, and haughty glance remains
unblistered in the blaze?"

Immediately that soul, who readily perceived
my question was of him, replied: 50
"What I was living, that in death am I.
Though Jove should weary out his smith,
from whom, in wrath, he snatched the thunder-bolt
by which I was, at last, transfixed;
and tho' he overtask his other slaves in turn 55
at Mongibello's smutty forge,
shouting: 'Help, help, O Vulcan good,'
as erst on Phlegra's stormy field; and tho'
he hurl his javelins with the full force of his arm,
no sweet revenge shall he enjoy." 60

Then spoke my Guide,
unwonted hardness in his tone:
"O Capanëus, still thy rampant pride remains,
and greater is thy punishment thereby:
No torment save thy self-consuming rage 65
would be proportioned to thy fiery arrogance."

This said, he turned to me with gentler lip:
"He of the seven kings who Thebes attacked, was one.
Heaven he scorned, and still, you see, defies,
reckless of wrath divine. 70

But, as I told him, pride and spite
in his own breast like scorpions sting.
"Now follow me,
shunning with care the scorching sand,
by keeping in the forest's shade." 75
In silence, soon we reached a spot,
where from the wood a little brook ran forth,
whose crimson hue doth make me shudder still.
Like Bulicam's hot, sulph'rous stream,
in which the female sinners soothe their pains, 80
straight through the sand this brook its channel had.
Hard petrifactions formed its bottom and its sides,
and on both banks its margins raised:
whence it appeared our path on these must be.
"Of all the things exhibited below 85
since we came through the entrance gate,
which unto none admittance doth refuse,
nought, stranger, have thine eyes beheld
than this red stream, whose vap'rous fumes
above its course extinguish all the sparks." 90
This said my Guide; and I besought
him fully to explain, since thus he had
my curiosity aroused.
"Encircled by the sea," he straight replied,
"a barren land there is, the isle of Crete, 95

under whose king the world was chaste.
A mountain there, mount Ida named,
was once with leaves and waters glad,
tho' dreary now, and in its age forlorn.
Saturn's wife on it young Jupiter concealed, 100
drowning his baby cries
with cymbal's clash and festal shouts.
"Within that mount a huge old man doth stand.
His back he to Damiata turns;
and straight at Rome, as in his mirror, looks. 105
His head is of fine gold composed;
pure silver are his chest and arms;
thence to the hips his frame is brass;
while all below is tempered steel,
save the right foot, which is of burnt clay, 110
tho' most directly it his weight supports.
Except the head, each part is cracked;
and from the fissures tear-drops fall,
which, gathering, pierce the grotto's walls,
and down, from rock to rock, unto this valley flow, 115
where Acheron, and Styx, and Phlegethon they feed,
and then by this tight channel run
until they reach the lowest depth of all,
and make Cocytus' lake: of which I speak not here,
since thou in fact, shalt view it soon." 120

"But if this brook," I then exclaimed,
"thus from our world descends,
why doth it first at this low range appear?"
"Inferno's gulf being round," he said,
"tho' thou so far therein hast come, 125
unto the bottom tending by the left,
the place's circuit thou not yet hast made;
so things like this because unseen before
need not thy wonder rouse."
"Then where, O Guide, is Phlegethon? 130
and Lethe, where? Silent of one art thou,
and sayest the other from the Ancient's cracks is rained."
"Pleased by thy questionings I ever am," he said;
"and yet the boiling of this crimson stream
might well have told that it is Phlegethon's hot flood.
"Lethe thou shalt behold, but not in this abyss.
'Tis where the spirits go to wash each lingering stain,*
when penitence hath wrought remittance of their sins.
"Now is it time to quit this wood.
Beside me follow close. The river's bank 140
a pathway forms, for it is not on fire,
and over it the burning flakes are quenched."

* "'Tis where," namely, in Purgatory.

CANTO XV.

ONE of the stony margins bears us now;
and clouds of vapour, hov'ring o'er the stream,
secure us from the flames around.
As where 'tween Bruges and Cadsand Flemings dread
the flood's wild sweep, 5
and raise a bulwark to resist the tide;
or where the Paduans strengthen sudden Brenta's banks,
their towns and castles to protect,
ere Chiarentana's snow melt 'neath the vernal sun,
so here firm dikes are built, 10
tho' less than those, in height and bulk,
the power that wrought constructed them.
  Already from the wood so far we'd gone
that, looking back,
in vain had I its outline sought, 15
when we a troop of spirits met,
coming along beside the bank,
and scanning us, as in the night
folk scan each other 'neath the hornèd moon:
with knitted brows, sharp'ning their sight, 20
as at the needle's eye an aged tailor peers.

Thus stared at by that curious band,
my face was recognised.—"A marvel now!"
catching my skirt, one shadow cried.
In turn I stared, 25
and looked so closely at that soul's baked face,
that e'en the shrivelled skin could not conceal
a countenance I once had known;
and, bending down my face to his, I said:
"Is Ser Brunetto also here?" 30
Then he: "My son be not displeased
if old Brunetto Latini with thee
a step or two return, leaving his troop to pass."
"I pray thee do so," fervently I cried;
"and we shall sit together, if you please, 35
and he permit with whom I am."
"O son," he said, "who of this crowd
an instant stops, a hundred years unfanned
upon the broiling sand is laid.
Therefore go on, and I will near thee walk, 40
till I rejoin my comrades, who now ramble there,
their endless pains lamenting dolefully."
Not from the dike dared I descend
to step on equal ground with him, but low
I held my head, like one with rev'rence filled. 45
Then he began: "What novel chance or lot,

before thy death, has led thee here;
and who is this that shews the road?"
"Up in the life serene," I said,
"within a wooded vale I went astray 50
ere yet my age was well matured.
But yester-morn on it I turned my back.
Falt'ring was I when he appeared,
who by these devious paths doth lead me home."
"Pursue thy star," the shade replied, 55
"and thou a glorious haven yet shalt win,
unless I augured ill in the fair life above.
And had I not so early died,
beholding Heaven thus gracious unto thee,
gladly should I have cheered thy toilsome work. 60
"But that ungrateful and malignant race
which came in olden time from Fiesolè,
and savours still of its rough mountain stone,
for thy good deeds will treat thee ill:
and naturally; for midst sour crabs 65
scarce should the fig its pleasant fruit produce.
"Tradition doth report that people blind
and greedy, proud and envious:
so follow not their paths unclean.
"For thee such honour is by fortune stored, 70

each side shall hunger for thy name's support;
but from the goat the sweet herb shall be safe.
"Still let the beasts of Fiesolè as litter tread
each other down, while they respect the plants,
if any in their sty should spring, 75
in which the holy seed revives
of Romans who abode in Florence when
was built that nest of rank malignity."
"Had my desire fruition seen," I cried,
"not yet hadst thou been banished from 80
sweet intercourse with men alive;
for memory recalls, and still my heart doth keep
the image of the dear, benign, paternal man
who, hour by hour, instructed me
how mortals may themselves immortalize; 85
and, while I live, it fitteth well
my gratitude should speak.
"Thy words prophetic, touching my career,
I keep with other texts to be explained by her,
should I so high attain, who perfect knowledge hath.
"But this much I would have thee know,
that while my conscience chideth not
for fortune I'm prepared.
Not new to me the promised woe:

so as she wills let Fortune turn her wheel, 95
the boor his mattock ply in Florence or on Fiesolè."
Now on his right the Master turned,
looking at me, and said:
"He listens well who marks the sense;"
but not the less, as we moved on, 100
I with Brunetto spake, and questioned him
of those most noted in his company.
"Of some we may converse," he said:
"the rest 'twere better not to name at all:
too short's the time so great a theme to treat. 105
Suffice it that all students were,
and learned men of much renown,
who by the self-same sin were stained on earth.
Príscian is with yon wretched gang;
Francesco of Accorso too, 110
and, if you please such loathsomeness to note,
Andréa, whom the Servant's Servant moved
from Arno unto Bácchiglione's see,
where he laid down his frame of vicious nerves.
"More I would say, but may not farther go; 115
nor further speech indulge;
for I perceive new dust clouds on the plain,
raised by a people I consort not with.

"My *Treasure* unto thee I recommend:
There I survive. I ask of thee no more." 120
Then turned he back, and sped like one
who on Verona's course tries for the mantle green,
and in the race appears to have
a fair chance of the prize.

CANTO XVI.

AND now we were where I could hear the sound
of waters tumbling to the ring below—
a booming noise like that of swarming bees;
when, lo, three shades together broke in haste
from some that past along, 5
beneath the scourging showers,
and sped to us, shouting as one:
"Stop, thou who seem'st by thy familiar garb
from our degraded land."
Ah me! what scars upon their limbs I saw, 10
recent and old, fire branded there:
Thinking of them I sicken still.
Attentive to their cries, my Teacher stopt
and said to me: "Now stay,
for courtesy to these is due; 15
tho', were't not for the fire
that swirls in their abode, I should have said
that haste more suited thee than them."
When we stood still, those shades resumed
their ancient wail; and then the three each other chased
round in a ring, which whirled unceasingly.

As wrestlers, stripped and greased,
watch for their grasp and vantage, ere
in mortal strife they close; so wheeling thus,
each of those shades, who dare no moment rest, 25
his eye kept fixed on me, and thus his face and feet
in opposite directions seemed to move.

"Now if the mis'ries of this sandy waste,
and our unblest and scorched aspéct,
make thee despise us and our prayer," one cried, 30
"let our renown, at least, incline thy tongue
to tell us who thou art, whose living feet
thus through Inferno tramp securely on.
He in whose footsteps I now tread,
tho' naked and tho' peeled, 35
was higher in degree than thou wouldst deem.
He grandson of the fair Gualdrada was,
and Guidogerra he was hight:
a man alike in council and in battle strong.
The other, who behind me trips the sand, 40
was Tegghia' Aldobrandi, for whose timely words
the world some gratitude should feel.
And I, who share their torments here,
was Rusticucci, whom a spendthrift wife
drove on to courses now requited thus." 45

Had I been fireproof I
had leapt among those souls,
unhindered by my Guide, I think;
but as I should have burnt and baked myself,
my fears restrained the gen'rous wish 50
which made me anxious to embrace them all.
Then I exclaimed: "O sorrow, not contempt,
your sad condition doth inspire.
Sorrow most deep and keen I felt
when he, my noble Teacher, said 55
some words preparing me to see
such men as you in such a woeful plight.
Mine is your city, and with proud affection I
your works and honoured names
have oft rehearsed, and lauded heard. 60
"This gall retains me not, but I pass on to taste
of sweet fruits promised by my truthful Guide;
yet to its centre I must first descend."
"For many lengthened years the spirit in
thy members live," said Rusticucci's shade, 65
"and thy fair fame thy body long survive,
an thou relate if valour and if courtesy
abide, as they were wont, in our fair town,
or have from it entirely fled;
for Gúglielmó Borsiere, who but lately joined 70

our suff'ring troop, and yonder herds,
grieveth us by his sad reports."
"An upstart people, unfamiliar wealth,
have bred in thee intemperance and pride,
my Florence, and already thou dost weep!" 75
This with uplifted face, I cried;
and those three souls, deeming their fears confirmed,
exchanged among them stricken looks.
"If it at other times as little costeth thee
to gratify another's wish," those shadows then exclaimed,
"happy thy gift of fervent utterance.
Shouldst thou escape this lurid gloom,
and see once more the stars of heaven,
and thankful say 'I was below,'
O speak of us to men!" 85
Then from their whirl they shot straight off,
and pinions seemed their glimmering feet:
Not quicker could "Amen" be said,
than out of sight they flew.
And now the Master forward moved, 90
and I with him. Few were our strides
before the noise of waters had so much increased
that speech between us could be scarcely heard.
E'en as that stream which first a sep'rate course
pursueth from mount Veso, eastward by 95

the left side of the Apennines—
and, there aloft, is Acquacheta hight,
until it reach the low Romagna, where,
at Forli, it the Móntonè becomes—
resoundeth, when from Alpine crags it leaps 100
to where San Beneditto's monks
should for a thousand brethren shelter find,
so, as it plunged down headlong from the broken rock,
the sanguine flood we heard
clashing with deafening din. 105

Around my waist a cord was girt,
wherewith some time I'd thought
to take the Leopard of the spotted skin.
Obedient to my Guide's command,
this girdle I unknotted now, 110
and rolled up tight, and gave to him;
and he, inclining to the right,
while somewhat distant from the edge abrupt,
threw it within those depths the river sought.

"Some striking thing will surely come," 115
I mused, "of this odd signal that
my Master follows with so keen an eye."

Ah, cautious men must be with those
who not the dead alone perceive,
but with the spirit view our very thoughts! 120

"Soon will arise," my sage explained,
"what I expect; and what was in thy dream
immediately will be in verity displayed."
Truths that incredible appear
should rarely pass the lips, for one, 125
tho' blameless, is by them discredited;
yet here I needs must speak; and by the notes
of this *Commedia* I, O Reader, vow—
so may my verses ring through ages hence—
that up the dense and dark pit air, 130
coming to me, a figure swam,
such as the bravest heart would quake before.
Upwards it struck, like one who's dived below
to loose an anchor fast in rocks,
or tangle which the sea conceals, and who, 135
with stretchèd arms and gathered feet returns.

CANTO XVII.

"BEHOLD the savage beast with sharpened tail,
who breaks through mountains, walls, and hosts,
and with his stench the world pollutes,"
my Guide proclaimed,
while beckoning on that shape to land 5
beside our stony path's extremity.
And straight that image foul of Fraud
approached, and raised himself upon the bank,
but drew not his long nether parts ashore.
A good man's face he had, 10
of aspect fair and mild.
The rest of him reptilian was:
Two paws were shaggy to the shoulder joint.
Back, chest, and both his sides were jagged
with knots, and horny scales, of divers hues, 15
brighter than Turks or Tartars wove
in their embroidered cloths,
or skilled Arachne on her toilsome loom.
As sometimes barges on the shore are drawn,
and lie in water part and part on land; 20

or as, where dwell the guzzling Goths,
the beaver waits his pray,
so crouched that worst of brutes upon the rim
that fenced with stone the desert's strand,
while in the void his brandished tail waved wide, 25
and, threatening, raised the venomed fork
which, as in scorpions, armed the end.

Then spake my Guide: "Tis needful now
our steps should turn aside until we reach
the beast malign recumbent there." 30

So to the right descended we,
and made ten paces on the verge,
escaping thus the sand and fiery flakes.

When near the monster come, I saw,
a little farther on, beside the open gulf, 35
a group of shadows seated on the ground.

"That thy experience of this belt
be perfected," the Master said,
"go thou and mark the mien of yonder souls;
but let thy words with them be few. 40
Meanwhile this beast I shall persuade
to bear us on his shoulders strong."

So to the inmost edge of this seventh circle of
Inferno's pit, I ventured on alone
to where were seated those afflicted ones. 45

Through their red eyes grief burst in streams,
while with their hands they vainly struck away
the blasting vapour, and the blist'ring soil—
like dogs which in the summer's heat,
with muzzle and with paw pursue 50
the biting gadflies, gnats, and fleas.

Long gazed I on the visages
of those in that distressful state,
yet none could recognise; but I observed
that from the neck of each was hung a pouch, 55
with colours, and with emblems marked,
whereon their eyes appeared to feed.
In coming close, a yellow pouch I saw
on which a lion's face and figure were
in gaudy azure wrought, 60
and, next to it, one caught my eye
on which a goose, white as a butter pat,
swam on a sanguine lake.

Then spoke a shade, who showed
a huge blue sow stamped on a silver sack, 65
and cried: "What in the pit hast thou to do?
Begone! But since thou'rt living still,
know that Vitaliano, who my neighbour was on earth,
at my left side shall on this waste be set.

"A Paduan I, tho' mixed with Florentines. 70
Often they stun my tingling ears,
shouting: 'He comes, the Prince of usurers,
bearing his pouch with three goats' heads.'"
He writhed his lips, and lolled his tongue,
as doth an ox that licks his nose. 75
Then, fearing I might vex my Guide,
who had permitted but a brief delay,
from those sad mockeries of noble names I turned.
And, lo, already was the Master perched
upon the haunches of that grewsome beast, 80
and shouting: "Stout and bold be now, my son:
Thus we descend the yawning void.
Mount thou in front, and I behind thee sit,
and guard thee from the switching tail."
Like one whom ague shivers seize, 85
whose nails grow livid, and who trembles o'er,
merely in looking at the chilling shade,
I, as the Master spake, became; but his
reproving glance, that shame awoke in me
which makes a servant brave before his gentle lord,
and, to the shoulders broad, at once I climbed.
"Hold fast," I then had fain besought,
only my quivering lips no words could shape;
but he, who oft from dangers had

my refuge proved, soon as I sat aloft, 95
threw round his arms, and firmly held me on.
"Now Geryon off," commanded he,
"and in wide circles, slow be thy descent:
Remember thy unwonted freight."
As backs the ship unstranded by the tide, 100
so moved that monster backward till
he felt himself afloat again,
when, in the void, his length he paddled round,
then eel-like stretched his wringling tail, and with
his reptile arms gathered the vap'rous gloom. 105
Not greater fear felt Phaëton
when he let slip the reins, and Phœbus' car
set fire to heaven, as one may still perceive;
nor wretched Icarus, when on his back
he felt the feathers dropping from the melted wax, 110
and "Perilous thy way," his father cried,
than I experienced when abroad in air,
from every solid thing removed,
and with the beast I rode alone in sight.
Now slowly, slowly swimmeth he, 115
sweeping in circles down, tho' only by
the rising draught his course we feel.
Soon on the right I heard, afar beneath,
the vortex roaring horribly;

and, stretching forth my head, I peered below, 120
when the uncertain bottom made me tremble more.
There flames obscurely gleamed, thence shriekings
came,
from which I shrank with gathered feet.—
At last I could discern the way we took,
and traced our circuits down 125
by woes on every side successive seen.
Like as the falcon long in air
without a glimpse of game, and careless of the lure,
making the falconer sigh: "Alas, he sinks!"
slow droops with weary wing to whence he swiftly rose
in many breezy rounds, and settles far
beyond his master's reach, in sour disdain,
so, sulkily, great Geryon lighted in the pit,
placing us on the ground beside the lofty precipice:
From his unusual burden then relieved, 135
up sprung he suddenly, and like an arrow flew.

CANTO XVIII.

A PORTION of Inferno Malebolgè's called.
Stony it is, and of an iron hue,
as is the rock encircling it.
Right in the middle of this horrid tract
gapeth a pit both wide and deep; 5
and which hereafter I describe.
The circle which remains between that pit
and the high cliffs which bound the place,
hath ten deep trenches through it cut.
When for the more security 10
successive ditches gird a castle's walls,
the ground by them divided is,
like that of which I speak;
and as to such a castle's gates
small bridges span the moats, 15
so here, forth from the rocky bounds,
run arching piers, that cross the trenches to
the central pit, and end therein.
'Twas on this region's edge we found ourselves

when Geryon shook us off.—Unto the left 20
the Poet walked, and I behind him travelled on.
On our right hand new miseries I saw:
new victims and new torturers
abounding in the first trench of the ten.
Nude sinners in its bottom swarmed. 25
On our side of the middle facing us they came,
upon the other moved with us, but taking longer steps.
Thus, in the year of Jubilee,
the pilgrim throng divides
upon the bridge of Rome: 30
all to St. Peter's bound the castle face,
and keep one side, while on the other come
those who, returning, face the Mount.
On either hand along the grisly vale
horn'd fiends were placed with lashes huge, 35
which they plied smartly on the spirits' backs.—
Ah! how the victims bounded up,
soon as they felt the thong,
and scud off from a second stroke!
As we advanced, one met my eyes, 40
of whom I cried, undoubtingly:
"On him, at least, I've looked before."
And straight I paused to scan him well.

My kind Guide also stopt;
and some way back permitted me to go. 45
Perceiving this, that scourged soul bent
to hide his face; but little served him that.
"O thou with eyes concealed," I said,
"unless thy features borrowed be,
Cacciânimíco surely art; 50
but how such pungent sauce hast won?"
Then he: "Unwillingly I tell;
but am constrained by thy clear living voice:
sweet souvenir of that old world above.
"'Twas I who led fair Ghisola, 55
Obezzo d'Este to satisfy:
however that foul tale be told.
"Of Bolognese not I alone weep here:
indeed so full of us the place has grown
that fewer tongues are taught 'sipa' for 'si' 60
between Savena and Renó.
And if of this thou proof desire,
remember thou our avaricious ways."
While thus he spake, a demon came
and smote him sore, exclaiming: "Ruffian off! 65
There are no women here to coin."
Rejoining now my escort calm,
a few more paces brought us to

an arching rock, projected from the boundary.
This, turning to our right, we mounted easily, 70
and stepped upon its rugged back:
parting thus from the circle of eternal cliffs.

Where yawned this bridge across the trench,
to give a passage to the suff'ring crowd,
my Guide said: "Stay, and on thy right observe 75
those other souls ill-born,
whose faces thou canst not have seen,
since they moved with us as we came along."

So from the ancient bridge we viewed the souls
who past beneath it in the fosse's farther side, 80
and who were also by the whips chastised.

Then, unbesought, my gracious Master said:
"Observe that mighty one who strides
unflinching in his agony:
Tearless he is, and regal still! 85
That Jason he, whose skill and courage won
the golden fleece the Colchians held:
He took his way through Lemnos' Isle,
wherein the women, pitiless and fierce,
to slaughter had their males consigned; 90
and there, with pledges and enticing tales,
beguiled Hypsipylè—that virgin who
her sex had cheated of her father's death—

and left her pregnant and forlorn.
For that, and for Medêa's wrongs 95
Vengeance assigns these retributive pains.
With him are all who women thus deceived.—
Of this first trench, and of the wights
its fangs enclose, suffice what thou hast seen."
We now were where the narrow bridge 100
abutted on the second mole,
and from its shoulders rose to span
another vale, through which a people past
snorting and growling, and their breasts
wofully smiting with their palms. 105
The valley's sides were crusted o'er with scum,
concreted from foul breathings, which
sharply our eyes and nose assailed.
And such in depth its bottom proved,
that, well to see it, we required to climb 110
the rocky arch unto its highest point.
This part attained, far in the ditch below,
we saw a race sunk deep in ordure foul,
which of the vilest nature seemed.
And looking there with searching keen, 115
a soul I saw with head so smeared
it showed not if he laic or tonsured clerk might be.

"Why starest thou," he cried,
"more fixidly at me than at my nasty kin!"
"Because," I said, "I verily do think 120
I've seen thee with a head less lavishly perfumed:
Alessio thou, Intérmini, of Lucca's state,
therefore I scan thee more than all the rest."
Then, drumming on his pumkin pate,
he cried: "Here I am plunged for flatteries, 125
of smearing which my tongue was never tired."
Turning from him, my Master said:
"Stretch forward now, and look down there,
well to discern the unclean face
of that dishevelled courtezan, 130
clawing herself with filthy nails;
and sometimes cowering, sometimes standing up.
Thaïs is she, who when her paramour
exclaimed: 'Have I now favour won?'
answered, deceiving him: 'Immense indeed.' 135
"Enough of such a sight assuredly we've had!"

CANTO XIX.

O SIMON MAGUS, O ye greedy sons of his,
who holy things, which unto piety
should wedded be, do oft—rapacious knaves!—
for gold and silver prostitute;
now trumpet-tongued I speak of you, 5
for in the third foss ye repent.

Already o'er the next long grave we stood,
high on the rock that reached across
its central depths.

Wisdom Supreme, how infinite thine arts: 10
in Heaven, Earth, and in the Land of Woe
impartially dispensing justice unto all!

Throughout this valley's bottom and its sides
the livid stone, I saw, was pierced with many holes,
all circular in shape, and similar in size, 15
and neither less nor greater than the cells
in my fair San Geovânni cut around the font
for priests to stand in when baptising there;
and one of which I broke, not many years ago,
to let a boy escape when nearly choked within: 20
of which ill-bruited deed suffice this true account.

From every hole there stuck
a sinner's feet and legs,
his upper parts being under ground.
And all the soles were wrapt in fire, 25
which made the knees convulsive spring
with violent jerks, which hempen cords had snapt.
As flames when feeding on an oily thing
lightly its surface lick,
so glid the fire from heel to toe. 30

Then I: "O Master say who is that soul,
who more exasperate, quivers most,
being fed on by a redder flame?"

And he: "If willing thou, I'll take thee down
where least the bank is steep, 35
that from the shade his name and works thou learn."

"Fairest to me what pleaseth thee," I said,
"My lord art thou, and mine thy will.
My wish is known to thee ere fashioned by my tongue."

Then stept we to the fourth dividing mole, 40
and, turning, went down by the left
into the narrow perforated vale.

Close at his side, the kind Guide held me up,
until we found the hole of him
whose frantic flings expressed his pain. 45

"Whoe'er thou art, inverted thus," I cried,
"O spirit sad, stuck like a stake in earth,
if thou be able, deign a word."
I waited like a friar shriving a murd'rer, who,
when in his pit head downwards tied, 50
by calling back the priest delays his doom.
"Art thou," a voice returned, "already here,
already here, O Boniface: and standing on thy feet!
If so the prophet's scroll by sundry years hath lied.
So quickly art thou sated of the wealth immense 55
for which thou didst not fear deceitfully to clutch
our lovely Lady, and her holy shrines pollute?"
Not comprehending what the wretched soul could mean,
I stood like one who's ridiculed,
and lacketh words to answer back. 60
Then Virgil prompted: "Say to him,
'I am not he, not he thou takest me for.'"
And that, at once, was my reply:
whereat the spirit writhed his feet,
and sighing, said with sobbing voice: 65
"What wouldst thou then with me?
If what I was concerns thee so
that to inquire thou down the steep art come,
know I the sacred mantle wore.

A true Orsini born : 70
so eager to enrich my cubs,
I grasped at gold above, and here myself am grasped.
"In turn are dragged within the rocky caves
extending far below my head,
those who in simony preceded me ; 75
and thither I shall sink to them,
when he arrive whom I supposed thou wert,
when suddenly I questioned thee.
But longer have my feet been singed,
and longer on my head I've stuck, 80
than he with ruddy feet shall planted thus remain ;
for quickly follows him, by baser works condemned,
an occidental Shepherd, scornful of the law,
who Boniface and me further in shall thrust.
Like Jason, read of in the Maccabees, 85
who from Antiochus promotion bought,
he for the chair shall bribe the wily king of France."
It may be I foolhardy was
that Pontiff thus to lecture in reply :
"Ah, what was then the price 90
St. Peter gave our Lord
in payment of the keys?
'Follow thou me,' alone was asked of him.
Nor Peter, nor the others, from Mathías took

his silver or his gold, in barter for the office that 95
the fell son of perdition lost.

"Here then abide, justly condemned;
and never quit thy hold of that ill-gotten gain
which hardened thee against Sicilia's king!

"But that I am debarred 100
by rev'rence for the sacred functions thou
in life's sweet day discharged,
I should yet harsher words employ;
for avarice like thine aggrieveth all the earth:
trampling the good, and raising up the bad. 105

"Of Pastors such as ye th' Evangelist was ware,
when She who sits on many waters was,
in commerce with the kings, made visible to him:
She who with seven heads was born,
and by ten horns approved, 110
while virtue still continued dear unto her spouse.
Silver and gold as gods ye serve:
what are ye then short of idolaters?
the pagan has his idol, ye each money piece adore!

"Ah, Constantine! a source of ill has proved,
not thy conversion, but the generous dower
that first made rich the Papal throne."

While thus the heels of Nich'las I addressed,

he, conscience stung, or much enraged,
by violent spasms seemed convulsed. 120

But pleased, I think, the Master was—
so satisfied the smile that played upon his lips,
while list'ning to the truths thus candidly expressed.

Around me then his arms were thrown;
and I close to his breast was clasped, 125
while he reclimbed where our descent was made.

Not by my weight seemed he fatigued;
and we attained the lofty arch,
which to the fourth bank joins the fifth.

Thereon he gently set me down; 130
gently, because the place was jagg'd and steep,
and such as even goats would shun.

Thence was beheld another trench.

CANTO XX.

HERE further chastisements my verse records,
in this the twentieth chant of my first lay,
whereof the sunken form the theme.
Intently now my gaze was fixed
in that new hollow at my feet exposed. 5
Bedewed it seemed by tears, which anguish wrung
from grief-worn people, who, along its winding bed,
in close procession marched: slowly like those
who litanies repeat.
When practice made my vision keen, 10
wondrously twisted every shade appeared;
for to his back the chin of each was screwed,
so that his face looked forth behind.
With backward step they moved, since to their front
no eye could possibly be turned. 15
Paralysis, perhaps, might human frames
thus wrench about; but neither have I seen,
nor reckon I on seeing any case so bad.
An Heaven grant thee grace
to profit by the tale, judge, Reader, now, 20

if possible it was dry-eyed to be,
when I beheld our image so awry,
that every tear let fall, rolled down the spine,
straight through the course cleft in our back.
And verily I wept, while leaning on a point 25
of the unyielding rock. Thereat my Guide,
"Art thou as stupid as the rest?" exclaimed.
"Thy pity lives where it had well be dead;
for what is more atrocious than
compassionating those whom Justice so condemns? 30
Then raise thy head, raise it and see
him whom the earth engulfed before his Theban foes.
'Ho, Amphiaräus! Whither dost thou leap?
The battle wouldst thou shun?' they in derision cried;
but not the less he headlong plunged 35
to Minos, who each sinner grasps in turn.
Note how his shoulders have his breast become.
For looking on before, with too inquisitive a gaze,
now looks he back, and backward walks.
"And there's Tiresias, once transformed, 40
when for the male the female sex he got:
his limbs throughout refashioning;
and who till he, in after years, restruck
the interwoven serpent pair
his manly beard could not resume. 45

"That shade, whose back is next Tiresias' paunch,
Aronta is, who on the hills of Luni, where
still grub the Carrarese that hut below,
among the snowy marbles had his cavern home,
whence he could gaze, with unobstructed view, 50
upon the waves beneath, and all the stars above.

"And she whose bosom, turned from us,
is by her long loose hair concealed—
her twisted head dropping its tresses there,—
was Manto, vagrant once in many lands, 55
and then a resident where I was born;
wherefore, I pray thee, listen to her tale:

"Her sire, Tiresias, dead,
and Bacchus' city by the tyrant bound,
long o'er the earth she roamed. 60

"In Italy, the beautiful, there lies,
beside the Tyrol Alps that shut the Germans out,
a lake, which is Benâco named.*

"From Garda to the Val Camonica,
the Alps are by a thousand streamlets bathed, 65
whose waters in that lake repose.

"A place there is about its middle, where
the bishops of Verona, Brescia, and of Trent,
their benedictions could with equal right bestow.

* Benaco, now called the Lago di Garda.

And at it southern end, where lower are its banks, 70
Peschiera rears its bulwarks, fair and strong,
confronting still the Brescians and the Bergamese.
"Here overflows the surplus water which
no room within Benâco's bosom finds,
and, as a river, through green pastures runs; 75
and running thus, is called
no more Benâco, but the Mincio, till,
beside Governo, with the Po it joins.
"Not long its course ere level lands it meets,
where, spreading wide, it forms a marsh, 80
which sometimes in the summer saddeneth the air.
"When passing this, the churlish maiden saw,
amidst the swamp, a tract of land
untilled and desolate.
All consort with mankind to shun, 85
there with her slaves she stopt, and wrought her spells;
there lived, and there her empty body left.
"Then on this spot the races scattered round
together drew, because the place was strong
by reason of the marsh surrounding it. 90
And over those dead bones they built a town;
and, after her who first the site preferred,
they called it Mantua: no better omen sought.—

More num'rous were its people ere
weak Casalodi was outwitted by 95
the bloody Pinamonte's crafty trick.
"I tell thee this, that when thou hear
my city's origin to other sources traced,
thou mayest the truth in spite of lies believe."
"O Master," I replied, "thy narrative 100
so certain seems, and so secures my faith,
that lifeless ashes must all other tales appear.
"But tell me now if thou amongst
the souls that pass below, any of note discern;
for all my thoughts are still intent on them." 105
"That one whose jaws cast down their beard
upon his shoulders brown, an Augur was
when Greece, gone out to Troy, was emptied so of males
that scarcely babes were in the cradles left.
With Calchus, he divined the hour 110
to cut, in Aulis' port, the first ship's cables free.
Eurypilus his name, as somewhere in
my lofty Tragedy 'tis sung:
Well know'st thou that, to whom the whole is known.
"That other, with the shrunken flanks, 115
was Michael Scott, who truly worked
many a slight of magical deceit.

"Guido Bonatti follows with Asdente, who
now fruitlessly laments that he for sorcery
did quit his useful last and twine. 120

"And mark the wretched sluts, who left
their needles, looms, and spinning-wheels, to work
foul witchcrafts with wax images and herbs.

"But hence we go! Cain with the thorns*
is near the meeting of the hemispheres arrived, 125
and tips the western wave in Seville's bay;
for yester night the moon her orb had filled:
as thou, perchance, rememberest,
since in the darksome wood some aid she lent."

While thus he spake we moved away. 130

* The Moon.

CANTO XXI.

PASSING from bridge to bridge, we converse held
of things which my *Commedia* cares not to recall;
and having climbed the next high arch, we paused.
in Malebolge's fifth sad trench to look,
and hear the wild complaints of other souls: 5
and marvellously dark their dungeon was.
As in Venetian arsenals,
in winter time, tenacious pitch doth boil,
to calk the leaking hulls—for ships must then
the ocean shun, and mariners ashore 10
new vessels build; or plug the sides of those
whose timbers have in summer tempests sprung;
or shape the prows; or set the helms straight;
or cut fresh oars; or cordage twist;
or patch the stay-sail, or the mizzen mend,— 15
so boiled, tho' not by fire, but some abstruser art,
a viscous resin in that low abode,
and smeared its sides as if with melted tar.
The tar I saw but nought besides,
except the bubbles which its boiling raised, 20
when heaved and sank the dark expanse.

Whilst anxiously I scanned the place,
my Guide exclaimed: "Beware! beware!"
and, backward drawn, I staggered in affright;
then turned again, like one who fain would see 25
the thing from which he fled,
when, terror-struck,
he paused not to discern the aspect of the foe;
and, close behind, I saw a coal-black devil come
skipping along the rocky road! 30
Ah, what a wretch he looked,
what fierceness and relentlessness
e'en in his thorny wings, and in his vulture feet!
His back was high and angular,
and there, astride, a sinner sat, 35
of whom he grasped the ankle bones.

Arrived upon our bridge, he shrieked:
"Ho, Sinnerclutchers! see, a Santa Zita senator!
Thoroughly souse him whilst I hasten back
unto the city where such prizes now abound, 40
where every infant barters fraudfully,
and anything is sworn when cash is to be won!"

He pitched his load below, then, on the flinty rock,
returning, sped more swiftly off
than ever mastiff loosed upon a vagrant's track. 45

The sinner sank and then, convulsed, rolled up,

while fiends beneath the bridge clamoured at him :
" No Sacred Image sheds a blessing here,
nor swim ye in the tar as in the Sterchio's tide.
If from our hooks securely ye would rest, 50
beware of rising o'er the boiling flood."
Then in his flesh a hundred prongs they thrust,
and screeched : " Thy dancing be below ;
and in the dark thy thievishness indulge !"
Thus, at the cook's behest, do scullion-maids, 55
with busy hooks, plunge down the meat,
when floats it to the caldron's edge.
" That they may not observe thee here,"
the careful Master said : " Cower thou behind
this crag of rock, which for a screen will serve ; 60
and by no insult they shall offer me
be thou dismayed, for all their tricks I learnt
when once before I like obstructions met."
Then boldly down the bridge he strode,
and to the sixth embankment went, 65
where he a hardy front required ;
for as house-dogs with fury dash
upon a squalid wretch who begs
a morsel at the door,
so, from the arch, the demons sprang, 70
and with their barbed spears menaced him.

But he said calmly: "Don't be fools.
Ere touching me,
let one step forth to parley here;
and then consider if to hook me would be wise." 75
"Let Malacoda go," all cried at once;
and one came forward, while the rest held back.
"Can I oblige thee?" said the grinning fiend.
"Dost thou suppose, O Malacoda sage,"
my Guide replied, "that thus far I had come, 80
safe from your keen assaults,
had not the Power Divine my guardian been.
In Heaven 'tis ruled that through these regions dread
I guide a living man, so, unmolested, let us pass."
Then ceased the demon's blustering mood, 85
and from his unnerved hand the weapon dropt,
while, "strike not," sighed he to his brothers grim.
At this the Master cried to me:
"Ho, thou who'rt hidden 'mong the bridge's stones,
unharmed thou mayest rejoin me now." 90
Gladly I rose, and slunk to him,
but such a rush the devils made,
I feared their truce was treachery.—
Like fear I saw when once Caprona's garrison
marched out by treaty, and swift through 95
the serried ranks of foes all shuddering past.

Close to my Guide, doubting, I clung,
and turned not once my eyes
from that most fickle band of frowning fiends,
who shook at me their prongs, while muttered one : 100
" What if I prick him in the hinder parts ? "
" Nay, stick him in the ribs," was pleasantly rejoined.
But that strong fiend who'd talked with us,
wheeled sharply round, and roared :
" Hold back, Scarmiglion, addle-pate ! " 105
Then graciously to us : " Not farther can ye go
upon this broken path, for now the sixth arch lies
all shattered in the vale.
But if ye please your journey to pursue,
upon those splinters some way round proceed. 110
From them another reef the road prolongs.
" Yest're'en, five hours beyond the hour that is,
twelve hundred three score and six years had gone
since into fragments all the causeway fell.
" Some of my gang I now dispatch 115
to pounce on sinners who may air themselves.
Take them as Guides whom ye can trust.
" Ho ! Alichino, Calcabrina, forth ! "
he to the fiends began. " Cagnazzo, out ;
and Barbaricca lead the ten. 120
Hail Libicocco, Draghignazzo huge,

tusked Ciriâtto, doggish Graffiacán,
with Farfarello, headstrong Rubicanti, ho!
Sculk ye around our bird-lime pot;
and these souls lead, straight to the arch 125
which, quite unbroken, spans the ditch."
"O Master loved, what do I see?
Alone, alone proceed," I, trembling, cried.
"Dost know the way? If not, why go at all?
if watchful as of yore, 130
hear how they grind their fangish teeth;
and read the horrors in their hungry eyes!"
"I will not have thee craven," said my Guide.
"'Tis not at thee they gnash impatient jaws,
but at the sufferers in the tarry bog." 135
Then by the left bank went the hideous troop,
each demon winking as he past,
and shooting out his tongue. The chief replied
by one sharp whistle on his twisted tail.

CANTO XXII.

I'VE seen close squadrons shift their camp,
in muster range, charge on the foe,
or turn in flight; and light brigades
thy plains, Arezzo, scour; and I
have seen the swoop of bandit hordes; 5
the shock of tournaments, the joust's wild run,
each urged by trumpet's blare, or war-bell's clash,
by roll of drums, or castle larms,
with many a signal sound besides;
but ne'er, I think, so odd a pipe as that 10
the demon used startled a troop of horse or foot,
or ship bid tack, when steered by beacon or by star.
So went we then escorted by the devil's ten—
a charming company! "With saints in church
and topers at the tavern-bar" a good arrangement is! 15
When used to them, I turned again
to view the myst'ries of the resinous lake,
and habits of the souls immersed.
As dolphins arch their sheeny backs
when boding gales to watchful crews, 20

that these may reef their sails in time,
so oft, to ease their blistered skins,
the whelmèd sinners shrugged their shoulders up,
then, in a twinkling, drew them in.
Or as in shallows of a ditch 25
sit frogs, their body and their legs concealed,
and just their noses shewn,
so in the seething slime some spirits sat
till Barbaricca spied them out,
when, quick, their heads were jerked below. 30

But one, I shudder still to think of it,
delayed to plunge—as oft a silly frog will do
when all his mates have squatted down—
and Grafiacanè, who the nearest chanced to be,
hooked up his pitchy locks, and drew him to the shore,
shimmering black, just like an otter drenched.

Dost wonder that I name the fiend!
Each I had marked when chosen from the pack,
and often they each other named.

"Ho, Rubicante! clutch and claw, 40
and nicely peel his greasy back,"
in chorus shout the cursed crew.

Then I: "O Master mine, inquire, I pray,
what luckless wight hath fallen thus
into the demons' paws." 45

And he, approaching, asked; and that poor soul,
seeing in this a respite, slowly panted out:
"I in the kingdom of Navarre had birth.
Unto a lord my mother made me page;
for she had borne me to a ribald sire, 50
a waster of himself and of his goods.
Then I the good king Thibault's servant was
and used my trusts in fraudful bartering—
offence for which I render reckoning now."
Here Ciriâtto, from whose cheeks 55
two swine-like tusks projected far,
gored him behind,
and fair among the cats a rat was he,
till Barbaricca sprang and snatched him up,
growling: "Avaunt, while thus I hold him forkt." 60
Then looking to my Guide, enjoined:
"Now ask, if thou wouldst question more,
ere he be by the others into morsels torn."
So Virgil said: "Dost know, poor shade, if some
Italian souls with thee were buried in the pitch?" 65
"One from a northern state
left I but now," he sighed, moaning besides:
"Would I were with him sheltered in the tar!
No more should I then fear the gripe of taloned fiends."
At these rash words, fierce Libicocco cried, 70

"Thwarted are we!" Then grabbed the sinner's arm,
and with his hook a gash of flesh tore off.
Huge Draghignazzo hungered for the same,
and clutched the wretch's calves, but Barbaricca strict
wheeled right about, and scowled him back. 75
A moment's peace being granted thus,
my Master spoke again, and asked the tortured soul,
who at his wound was shuddering:
"Who is the Latian shade, whose envied lot is still
within the boiling flood to swim?" 80
"The friar Gomita," he replied,
"Gallurian, and a veritable fraud-pot once.
Foes of his master he was charged to guard,
and won their blessing by his treachery:
their money bribed him and he let them off: 85
So he confesses now. In other offices
no petty thief, but prince of truckers he.
With him converses Michael Zanchi, late
of Logodoro. Their Sardinian flats
they never cease to prate about— 90
Ah, now! that foulest fiend—that grinneth so!
More would I say, but dread he is prepared
my clammy hide to scrape again."
Turned the demon leader right

on Farfarello there, whose lurid eye-balls rolled, 95
and howled at him: "Damned vulture, off!"
"Wouldst thou now see or hear,"
the frightened soul resumed,
"Tuscans or Lombards; I shall summon them,
if back will step the Sinnerclutchers grim, 100
whose vengeful thrusts my fellow spirits dread.
Sitting still here, perfectly still,
I for the one I am seven shall call to view,
soon as I whistle as we're wont,
when of the fiends the coast is clear." 105
At this Cagnazzo sagely shook his snout:
"The sly dog's malice hatches now a scheme
of plumping out of reach."
Whereon that shade, unfailing in resource,
replied: "Malicious I, yea truly, when 110
contriving for my kin an increase of their pain!"
Then Alichino darted forth, and cried,
opposing all the rest: "Plunge if thou wilt,
I'll linger not in chase, but flash upon my wings
and catch thee in the pitch.— 115
Withdraw we from the shore, and let
him have a chance ten demons to o'erreach."
New sports, O Reader, hearken unto now.

The worthy fiends all turned their eyes away,
and he the first who had the most suspicious been. 120
Then not a moment lost the Navarrese,
but firmly set his foot, and, twink, away,
flipt off the bank, quite out of reach of all.
Wild were the demons then,
and most of all the one who'd urged them to the trial. 125
Off sprang he screaming: "Thief, I have thee now."
He caught him not, however, terror being fleeter far
than e'en a devil's wings; and in the sinner slumped.
Then Alichino rose, breasting the air:
'Twas like a duck hunt, when the duck has dived 130
before the falcon's swoop, and, of his quarry balked,
the falcon beateth back enraged.
But, savage at the loss of such diverting game,
fierce Calcabrina now, right ready was
to pick a quarrel with his mate; 135
and so, the Navarrese quite out of sight,
he grappled with his fellow fiend.
Then o'er the moat most frantically they clutched;
for Alichino was as tough as any sparrow hawk.
But tangled were their pinions soon, 140
and floundering they fell and spluttered in the bog.
There parted them the scorching heat;

but how could they arise again,
with wings beglued fast in the simm'ring tar?
So Barbaricca, grieving with the rest, 145
four demons straight despatched,
to aid them with their forks; and these
hurried to where there seemed the greatest chance
of hooking out the two, unwontedly entrapped;
and who already were considerably boiled. 150
We left them thus employed.

CANTO XXIII.

In silence and companionless we went,
the one in front, the other close behind,
like minor friars when travelling.
And that wild strife we'd seen
moved me to think of Æsop's tale 5
about the frog and mouse,
which well describes
the incidents
of that mischance which did the fiends befall.
And as one thought another prompts, 10
arose from that
one which my former fear revived:
"Since 'tis through us," so argued I,
"the fiends are foiled, and hurt and mocked
in grievous sort, 15
their rage will whet their native spite,
and us they'll chase with fiercer zest
than harrier does the hare he'd snap."
Already crept my scalp, and shivered all my skin,
as o'er my shoulder I glanced round. 20

"O Master," cried I, "somewhere let us hide,
for much I dread the Sinnerclutchers come—
yea, now, assuredly they follow us—
so vividly I fancy them, their very prongs I feel!"
Then he: "If I were leaded glass 25
not quicker I thy figure should reflect,
than my heart's ta'en thy present fear.
My thoughts meet thine with sympathy,
and with them do so perfectly accord
that both suggest the same device: 30
If on the right the bank be not too steep
for our descent, we in the next vale may
the seeming danger shun."
While yet he spake,
I saw the dragons come, with wings outspread; 35
already nigh, and on our capture bent.
Lightly my Guide then snatched me up,
e'en like a mother who, aroused by larms,
and seeing flames at hand,
picks up her child, and darts away, 40
thinking alone of him:
pausing scarce even to don a shift.
Over the rigid dike's sharp edge the Master stept,
and laid himself straight on the slope that dipt
steep to the bottom of the next low vale. 45

Never through duct did water faster shoot
to turn the wheel of landward mill,
just where the paddle plates are reached,
than down the smooth incline, lying upon his back,
the Master slid, tenderly clasping me, 50
as though I were rather his child than friend.[1]
Scarce had his feet the valley's bed attained
when o'er us glared the troop of panting fiends!—
But dread of them was felt no more,
for Providence, 55
which in the fifth partition let them loose,
decreed that they should ne'er beyond its limits go.
Dragging along the vale slow, languid steps,
a crowd of painted spirits past us now,
weeping, and seeming faint with woe and weariness.
Long cloaks they had, with cowls
that hung low on their brows, like those
that in Cologne by monks austere are worn.
Outside of gold they were, and cast a dazzle round;
within of lead, and thus so ponderous that 65
mere straw to them were Frederick's mantles dire.—
O cumbrous garb for never-ending time!
Round to the left we moved
with those clad souls, and heard their dismal sobs.
All burthened as they were, they paced, 70

so slowly that we new companions had
at every stride we took.
Then I besought my Guide to find
some shades who might by deed or name be known:
besought him heedfully to scan the crowd; 75
and one, who understood my Tuscan speech,
cried after us: "O stay your steps ye who
through this bronzed air so lightly speed:
Perchance I know what thou wouldst learn."
Pausing, my Guide said: "Wait, 80
then on at his own pace proceed."
We stopt, and in the eyes of two I saw
how painfully they strained to come:
retarded by their load, and by the crowded way.
At last arrived, they looked askance, 85
at me, and long in silence gazed;
then to each other turned, and whispered low:
"The action of his throat proves one alive.
If dead, by what unwonted right from our
oppressive stoles can they be free?" 90
Then faced they me, and said: "O Tuscan, come
this college of sad hypocrites to join,
disdain not to reveal thyself."
And I: "The noble town on Arno's stream
did give me birth and nourishment; 95

and now I wear the body I have always worn.—
But you, who then are ye, down whose wan cheeks
such sorrows ever gath'ring flow?
What anguish makes them glisten thus?"
And one replied: "Our yellow cloaks 100
are formed of lead, so thick that under them
we're crushed, and creak like balances o'ercharged.
Right jovial friars and Bolognese were we:
He Loderingo, Catalano I.
Thy city chose us, two instead of one, 105
contentious Guelphs and Ghibellines
to represent and reconcile.—
How just our rule let waste Gardingo's ruins tell!"
Then I began: "O Friars, your vile"——
but said no more, mine eyes being caught 110
by one upon the earth; there crucified and riveted;
and who, at sight of me, writhed violently his frame,
and blew his beard with sighs.
Of him Friar Catalano said:
"That soul transfixed who draws thy gaze, 115
was Caiaphas who to the Pharisees maintained,
one for the people should such torture bear.
Thus racked and naked, on the road he lies
feeling the tramp
of all the loaded throng. 120

And thus in anguish here are Annas, his wife's sire,
and all the members of that council which
to Israel proved calamitous."

I noted now that Virgil marvelled much
o'er him thus abject on his cross laid out 125
eternal exile to endure.

When satisfied, he turned and said:
"Tell us, O Friar, an it permitted be,
if on our right breaks any gap
through which we two may issue hence 130
without the black-winged angels' aid
to help us from this glen to rise."

Replied that soul: "Aye, nearer than thou hop'st,
a stone way lies, which from the mighty barrier parts
and bridges all the vales save this, 135
where it hath wholly crumbled down.
Upon its ruins ye
may clamber to the dike."

His head bent low in thought, the Guide
then said: "So falsely was described the way 140
by him who hooks the shades in yonder slime!"

"I at Bologna," said the friar, "oft heard
the devil's vices told: 'A liar he,
and father of all lies,' is quite familiar to mine ear."

Then strode the Master forth, with lengthened steps,
and somewhat ruffled cheer;
and I, departing from the tott'ring souls,
kept in the prints of his beloved feet.

CANTO XXIV.

In that part of the youthful year when first
the sun beneath Aquarius trims his hair,
and wane to twelve the shrouded hours of night;
when hoar-frost counterfeits upon the earth
the image of her sister white, 5
but keeps not long her plumes,
the herd, whose fodder fails,
on waking sees the snow like garb upon his fields,
and, heart-sad, smites his thigh,
and in his hut moves listlessly, 10
grieving like one quite to his wit's end driv'n,
till, forth again, he sees the rime clear into dew,
and glisten o'er the world's fresh morning face,
when, grasping fast his crook, with eagerness
he leadeth forth his flock to feed. 15

With like dismay the Master made me shrink
when I beheld his darkened brow,
so quickly too, my fears dispersed again,
when, at the shattered bridge arrived,

he turned to me with those sweet eyes he had 20
that day I met him on the mountain's side.
Well having scanned the rugged mass,
and well matured his plan,
he stretched his arm, and grasped my hand.
As one at work who calculates each stroke, 25
nor strikes till the effect's foreseen,
he clomb with me each block, and paused on each
to view the next, and murmur low:
"Now unto that we rise;
but try thou first if it will bear thy weight." 30
No way was this for those in leaden garments clad,
since scarcely he, so light, and I, by him sustained,
could climb from jagg to jagg.
But that the bank was less in height
than that we slid down on the other side, 35
here I, at least had beaten been:
Lower it was, for Malebolgè slopes
down to the nethermost pit of Hell;
and thus each of its ten concentric rings of pain
its outer coast has high, its inner not so high. 40
At length we grasped and clambered on the stone
whence sharp the arch had broken off.
And so the thirsty toil had drained my lungs,

when I attained the top, that I collapsed,
and faint, lay down to pant. 45

But soon the Master urged: "Now must thou cast
thy sloth away: Dreaming on down
no fame is won, nor comes it 'neath the coverlid.
Who thus consumes his hours,
leaves of himself on earth such vestige slight 50
as smoke in air, or foam bells on the stream.
Up then, and brace thy falt'ring strength
with the strong will that stalks unquailing, when
yielding not, weary, to the heavy body's weariness.
A longer stair hast thou to climb. 55
Suffice not those yet overcome.
Concerning this, let my fair warning profit thee."

Thereat I rose, broad'ning my chest, and said,
with bolder voice than lungs unsated could support:
"Go on; for I again am strong, and of good heart."

We took our way upon the arch that crost
the gulf beyond; and it was narrow, rugged, hard,
and steeper than the bridges past.

Speaking I went lest I should faint appear;
and, as in answer to my speech, a voice, that seemed
to blurt out words unformed, came from the depths.

I know not what it said, tho' I was then

well up the bridge that spanned the place;
but ireful accents shrilled the sound.
I bent to look below, but living eyes 70
pierced not the dense and lightless air;
wherefore I said: "O Master, let us pass from this
too lofty arch, and seek the further dike;
for as I hear and do not understand,
so I in looking down distinguish nought." 75
"My onward step replies," he said:
"Each reasonable wish we should
without demur concede."
So we descend along the ridge, and pass
the buttress, which the eighth embankment joins; 80
and thence the chasm's depths are seen.
There rolling bands of serpents, so uncouth
and many hued appeared, that even now,
the thought of them doth scare my blood.
No more let Libya boast of arid sand 85
engendering stink-snakes, adderdarters, and
spot-vipers, two-heads, and the cobra dire,
for pests so hideous and so foul
nor it, nor Ethiopia hot,
nor e'en the Red Sea's strand can show. 90
Amid the frightful swarm ran naked shades,

finding no refuge in their wild alarm,
and with no charmèd heliotrope's defence.
Their hands were tied behind by serpent thongs,
of which the heads and tails past round their loins, 95
and coiled in knots in front.
And lo! on one, not far from us,
a serpent sprang, and in his neck
inclasped its fangs.
That instant he 100
caught fire and blazed,
at once, to ashes gray;
but hardly had he dust become,
when of themselves his ashes gathered in,
and he stood up restored. 105
Thus, sages say,
the Phœnix dies and is reborn
in its five-hundredth year:
No herb or grain it picks, but lives on tears
of incense, and amomum balm, 110
while myrrh and spikenard swathe its fun'ral pile.
As one who fell, and wits not if
devils possessed and threw him down,
or epileptic spasms wrenched his frame,
and, rising, looks around, confused 115
and dizzy through the anguish he has borne,

and, looking, sighs, so looked
and sighed the sinner when he rose.—
Eternal Justice, how severe thy law,
which on the doomed such vengeance brings! 120
My Guide then asked his name;
and he: "From Tuscany I fell not long ago,
and this wild gullet gulped me in.
No human, but a bestial life I chose;
mule that I was. Van Fucci I; 125
a brute, for whom Pistoia was a fitting den."
Then I besought the Guide to bid him stay;
and "Ask," I said, "what he atones for here;
for once I knew him as a man of rage and blood."
At this the sinner feigned no vain disguise, 130
but, cowering, he with abject look,
and burning glow of shame, replied:
"More pained am I that thou
dost see me in this loathsome place
than I was when first rent from living men; 135
yet what thou wilt I am unable to refuse:
"So much degraded here am I, because
I robbed the sacristy of all its vessels rich,
and falsely on another threw the blame.
"But lest thou shouldst rejoice to see me thus, 140

bear with thee, if thou leave this dark abode,
the things I now foretell:
"Pistoia first of Neri's thinned;
then Florence other laws and rulers knows;
Mars from the Val di Magra draws a fire 145
enshrouded close in surcharged clouds,
and, with impetuous tempest, he
in battle rages on Peceno's plain,
where, suddenly, the clouds are split,
and every Banco lies transpierced. 150
"This I have said to torture thee."

CANTO XXV.

His prophecy thus made, the thief
threw up his hands with scornful flout,
and cried: "A fig for Heaven and all her laws!"
Thenceforth I viewed the snakes as friends,
for one of them wound tight around his neck, 5
as tho' it said: "I will thou speak no more;"
and one bound down his arms behind again,
and linked itself so firmly on his chest,
that he could not his elbows move.
Pistoia, ah Pistoia! why dost not decide 10
to burn thyself outright, and end thyself,
since thus in sin thy sons eclipse their evil sires?
Through all Inferno's circles dark, no soul
so proud as this in daring blasphemy I've seen:
not even him by doom hurled from the Theban wall.
Pinioned and choked the shade in silence fled;
and then I saw a Centaur, who in anger cried:
"where has the bitter-hearted caitiff gone?"
Marémma's fen hath scarce so many snakes
as ringed that Centaur's haunch, e'en from the tail

to where our human shape begins.
And on his back and shoulders clung
a dragon, with wide spreading wings,
and who, with fiery breath, ignit each soul he met.
"Cacus is this," my Master said, 25
"who 'neath the rock of Aventine
oft made the earth with blood ponds reek.
"Not with his fellow Centaurs goes he now,
because he stole those cattle huge
which near his mountain cavern grazed: 30
a villany for which he fell at last beneath
the club of Hercules; who dinted him
with many blows long after he was slain."
While thus he spake the creature trotted off,
and under us three spirits came, 35
whom we perceived not till
they cried: "Lo, who are ye?"
which changed our theme,
and unto them we now gave heed.
I knew them not but it befell, 40
as it doth oft befall,
one had to name the next,
thus: "What's become of Ceanfa now?"
To which I drew my Guide's attention by
my finger placed across my lips. 45

No marvel, Reader, shouldst thou be but slow
to credit what I next relate, for I,
who saw the thing, do scarce allow it yet.
While I was gazing on the three, behold,
a serpent with six feet sped unto one of them, 50
sprang up, and fastened over him.
Its middle feet around his belly clung;
its forefeet griped his arms;
while in each cheek a fang was fleshed.
Its hind legs stretched upon his thighs, 55
and 'tween the two its tail was thrust,
and bent up, wriggling on his back.
Never did ivy clasp so tightly on a tree
as now that monster's legs adhered
unto his victim's limbs; 60
and, as if burning wax they'd been,
sticking, they blended their contrasting hues,
till which was which could scarce be seen.
Just so a candle's wick, of papyrus composed,
before the flame acquires a brownish tint, 65
which is not black, but black and white combined.
The two remaining sinners gazed,
and cried: "Ah, now, Agnello how thou'rt changed:
Lo, neither this nor that art thou!"
The two heads had already joined, 70

the faces blended, and the features merged.
The serpent's paws and sinner's arms
a pair of arms become; its hind legs with
his thighs unite; the bellies form a whole
of shape ne'er seen before: 75
Thus all the parts transmuted are,
and man nor beast the creature seems
which now trails off with lagging gait.
As in the dog-days, when
a lizard darts from hedge to hedge, 80
it glints across, a vivid flash;
like it, right at the other souls, now lept
a reptile. Both its eyes were sparks of fire.
Livid and black's a peppercorn its adder body seemed.
Of one it stung that part by which 85
our embryo life the vital current drinks,
then dropped before him on the ground.
Without a word, the struck thief stared at it;
and stood with rigid feet; then, yawning, gasped,
as if by fever or by sleep subdued. 90
He eyed the reptile, him the reptile eyed.
The mouth of one the other's wound
emitted fumes, which met and mixt.
No wonder more let Lucan draw

by telling of Sabellus' and Nassidius' doom, 95
but wait and hear what I describe.
Of Arethusa and of Cadmus changed,
no more let Ovid boast; for if of one a fount,
and of the next a snake he made, I grudge it not;
for ne'er he thought to change two beings so 100
that they, in rivalry, when face to face,
should each the other's shape and substance take.
But here, with jealous zeal, they altered thus.
Into a fork the lizard cleft its tail;
the wounded thief his feet and ankles knit, 105
so that the legs and thighs
were welded into one, and where they met
was scarcely seen. The beast's split tail
assumed the shape the spirit's legs had lost;
and while its skin grew soft 110
his newly fashioned end was hardened into scales.
I saw the sinner's arms into his armpits sink,
and as they sank in like proportion stretched
the shorter forelegs of the brute,
whose hind feet then, in-writhing, shrank, 115
and twisted out of sight, while corresponding limbs
the wretched spirit's flanks produced.
The mingling fumes their colours changed,
and hair on one did generate,

while singeing all the other's off. 120
The beast arose, and prone the sinner sank;
yet neither would the hardened eyes avert
through which each marked the other's figure grow.
The one erect drew in its muzzle to the brow,
and, from the surplus matter gathered thus, 125
ears sprouted from its lizard cheeks,
while what remained of snout,
of its abundance, made a human nose,
and fleshy lips to correspond.
He crawling now meanwhile thrust out his nose, 130
and drew his ears within,
as hides a snail its horns;
and then his tongue, so lately glib in speech,
grew cloven, while the viper's fork became
a single prong. The magic fumes then ceased. 135

And now the soul into a brute transformed,
scuttled away, shrill hissing down the vale.

The other, splutt'ring, gibed with his new tongue;
then, shrugging his unwonted shoulders, said:
"How jolly 'tis to see Buôso thus 140
crawling upon his belly as I used to do!"

So do the races of the seventh sink transmute
and interchange; and let the oddness of the sight
be fair excuse if I too long on horrors dwell.

I add alone, that tho' my sight was dimmed, 145
and e'en my brain bewildered too,
those spirits did not slink away
before Sciancáto I did recognise.
He 'twas who of the three unaltered stood.
The being who a human shape resumed, 150
was he whom still Gaville laments.

CANTO XXVI.

EXULT, O Florence, in thy great renown;
that over land and sea thy wings expand,
and Hell itself thy fame allows!
Five citizens of thine among the thieves I found:
for whom I blush: 5
by whom thine honour is not raised.
But if our morning dreams prophetic are,
soon shalt thou feel the brand
that Prato and the rest, would call on thee.
And were it come, the time would suit me well. 10
Since come it must, I long for it,
lest, later, it should weigh upon my feebler age.
We left our stand, and by the jaggs whereon
we'd made our passage from the bridge,
the Master clomb and drew me up. 15
And, toiling on our lonesome way
among the craggy splinters of the arch beyond,
ill sped the foot without the clinging hand.
Sorely I grieved: my grief is sore,
when mem'ry shews what then appeared.— 20

Now must I curb the flight my genius takes,
lest it should dare where virtue shrinks;
and that if kindly star, or higher power,
have strength bestowed, I ne'er regret the boon.
In that bright season when the least is veiled, 25
he whose effulgence gilds the earth,
and at the hour when bees yield to the evening gnat,
the peasant, on the hill reclined,
perceives the vale, in which his vineyard lies,
alight with bick'ring fireflies' gleam. 30
So, I beheld, with many flames like theirs
the eighth long chasm shine, soon as I stood
where its expanse was shown beneath.
And as Elisha, who was by the bears avenged,
beheld Elijah's chariot rise, when with its steeds 35
it swept around the whirlwind's spire,
and his strained eyes could only follow so,
as just to catch a gleam of flame,
blown like a crimson cloudlet up,
thus in the yawning gulf those lights glanced by, 40
and nought but them could I discern,
though, thievishly, each held a sinner's soul within.
In wonder, I stretched o'er the bridge,
and had I not a rock grasped fast,
I, overbalancing, had tumbled down. 45

My eagerness perceiving, spake my Guide:
"Within these fires the spirits are
self-swathed in that which scorcheth them."
"Master," I said, "thy words confirm
what I already did suspect; 50
and I had fain inquired,
who he might be within yon flame,
that parteth at the top, as if above the pyre
on which the brothers Polynices and Eteocles did
blaze."
And he: "Within it Diomed 55
is tortured with Ulysses; for together they,
in anguish are as they together erred.
Therein they rue the ambush of the wooden horse,
whereby in Trojan walls a door was cloven for
the valiant Eneas, founder of the Roman race; 60
and there regret the fraud through which, tho' dead,
Deïdamia her Achilles still laments;—
the theft of the Palladium they expiate besides."
"If they, tho' burning, still converse,"
so couched was my request, "I, Master, do entreat,
a thousand times I beg,
that thou permit me now to tarry here,
until the hornèd flame beside us shall arrive.
How long I for't mine attitude doth show."

"Full laudable thy wish," 70
the willing Guide replied, "and therefore I agree.
But carefully refrain from uttering a word.
I apprehend thy wishes well,
so leave me now to speak; for dainty eared are Greeks:
thy mingled tongue the haughty pair might scorn."
Approached us now the double flame,
and, choosing well his time,
Virgil addressed it thus:
"O ye, together in one fire,
if ye approved me in my life; 80
if much or little my desert,
when, on the earth, the tuneful strain I wrote,
depart not yet, but let Ulysses tell
where, wand'ring, he encountered death."
The greater horn of that most ancient fire 85
began to writhe and murmur like
a flame that wrestles with the wind;
then, flick'ring at the top,
as if it were the tongue that spake,
sent forth a voice articulate, which said: 90
"When I escaped the lures of Circi, who
beyond a year enthralled me near Gaëta's rock,
ere from Eneas' nurse it took that name,

nor fondness for my son, nor reverence for
my aged sire, nor the just debt of love 95
that should Penelopè have cheered,
could quench in me the ardour I
had to become expert in world lore,
and prove the vices and the virtues of mankind.

"I ventured on the deep and open sea 100
with but a single bark, and with the few
companions who untiring love had shown.
Each shore, far as the Spanish main
and Moorish strand, I saw; Sardinia too,
and all the isles our ocean bathes. 105

"Aged and slow my crew and I had grown,
when we attained the narrow strait,
where Hercules his warning columns placed,
that men might dread the unknown depths beyond.

"When on the right I'd past Seville, 110
and on the left had Ceuta seen,
I thus began: 'O brothers, who
the Western Gate have through a myriad perils won,
unto the poor brief vigil left
your senses now 115
deny not the experience of
the yet unpeopled plains behind the sun.
Recall your origin and name:

Ye were not made to live like brutes;
but virtue, and all knowledge to pursue.' 120

"Through these few words, such keen desire
spurred my companion's zeal, that I
from that rash voyage had held them back in vain.

"So tow'rds the dawn we veered the poop again;
and for our flight we of our oars made wings 125
then on to evening sped, but with a leftward bend.

"Already night the other pole with its
attendant stars displayed, while ours had sunk
below the ocean's northern marge;
and five times had relumed, and quenched as oft, 130
the moon her earthward side,
since first we ventured on the arduous way,
when, lo, a Mountain, in the distance dim,*
which seemed to me the loftiest
I ever had beheld. 135

"Much joy we had, but quick succeeded dole;
for, from the land new found, a whirlwind sprang,
and struck our weather bow.
The ship and waves it three times swirled around,
and with its fourth blast raised our poop in air, 140
and plunged our prow, then, as the fates decreed,
we sank, and over us the wildered waters closed.

* A Mountain, viz. that of Purgatory.

CANTO XXVII.

ERECT and still the flame was now,
its speech being done, and, with the leave
of my sweet Bard, it passed away,
just when another, close behind,
drew our attention to its waving top, 5
by sounds confused, that issued thence.

As the Sicilian bull—which roared out first,
and justly so, with doleful groans of him
by whom its brazen frame was wrought and tuned—
rebellowed with th' imprisoned victims' cries 10
so naturally, that, though of metal made,
it seemed by bestial anguish racked,
so here, from having no clear exit from
their source within the fire, of bick'ring flames
this other soul's sad words the language seemed. 15
But when at last they found a vent,
passing they made the fire-crest vibrate like
the tongue that uttered them;
and this we heard: "O thou whom I address,
and who 'Go on, I urge no more,' didst say, 20

in ancient Lombard, to Ulysses' fire,
though I, perchance, arrive but late,
let it not irk thee here to stay and talk :
It irks not me, and yet I burn.
"If thou hast lately sunk to this blind world 25
from that fair Latian land
whence all my sins I brought,
say, if Romagna be at peace or war ;
for I am from the hills between
Urbino and the peaks from which the Tiber flows."
I still was forward in attention bent,
when, touching me, my Leader whispered thus :
"Speak now for he Italian is."
And I, whose answer was prepared,
without delay began : 35
"O soul in that flame-garb concealed,
Romagna is not, nor hath been,
exempt from war within her tyrants' hearts,
but on her soil no open strife I left.
"Ravenna is as it for many years hath been. 40
Polenta's Eagle o'er it broods, and, ample-winged,
o'er-shadows Cervia too.
"Stout Forli, proved by lengthened siege,
and by the slaughtered Franks beneath its walls,
the Green Lion's claws clutch fast again. 45

"Verrucchio's Mastiffs, sire and son,
who savagely Montagna tore,
their busy teeth still in their kennel ply.
"The cities on Lamone's and Santerno's banks,
the young Lion of the argent lair doth rule; 50
and he his faction changeth with the season's change.
"Cesena, which the Savio laps,
as it between the plain and mountain lies,
so it 'tween servitude and freedom lives.
"But thou, pray tell me who thou wert: 55
Be not more hard than I have found the rest,
so may thine honour still on the earth be green."
Awhile the flame its wonted moan repeats,
swaying its point from side to side,
then utt'rance findeth thus: 60
"Could I suppose my answer were
to one who ever might unto the world return,
no more should play this tongue of flame;
but since, if what I've heard be true,
none from this depth hath risen alive, 65
no dread of infamy need stop my tale.
"A man of arms was I, then cordelier:
hoping the monk's cord might atonement prove.
And my fair hope had been fulfill'd
had not Pope Boniface, whom evil take, 70

seduced me back to sin:
and how and why I now will tell:
"Whilst I was in the pulp and bones
my mother gave, less lionine
than foxlike were my ways. 75
All guiles and covert courses were
to me familiar; and so well did I in cunning thrive
the fame thereof o'er all the world was spread;
but when I felt that part of life attained
when every man, his voyage of life nigh done, 80
should reef his sails, and coil his ropes,
that which had tasted well grew bitter on my tongue,
and to contríte confession I was fain to turn:
Ah, me! and that might have availed me much!
But then the prince of modern Pharisees, 85
with Cardinal Colonna, near the Lateran, at war—
not, mark ye well, with Saracens or Jews,
for every enemy of his was Christian born,
and none had joined the siege of Acre, or
had traded in the Sultan's land—regarding not 90
the highest office, nor the holy orders in himself,
nor yet in me St. Francis' cord, which was
not used to fatten those it girt,
did summon me as adept sage,
to nurse the fever of his pride: 95

as Constantine had called Sylvester from
his mountain cave to heal his leprosy.
"He craved my counsel, but I held my peace,
for drunken seemed the words he spake.
Then subtily he said: 'Untroubled be thy heart.
E'en now I do absolve thee: teach me then,
how I in dust may Palestrina lay,
Heaven I lock and unlock, thou dost know,
for twain the sacred keys
my hermit predecessor weakly dropt.' 105
"These mighty arguments prevailed,
and made me think by silence I should err;
so I replied: 'O Father, since now washed
from all the sin I shall commit, mark this:
By lib'ral promise and performance slack 110
thou shalt prevail, and thy high seat retain.'
"For me St. Francis came when I was dead;
but, lo, an angel black appear'd besides,
and said: 'Nay, take not him, nor wrong me so;
'tis fit he down among my slaves be dragged; 115
and since he gave the fraudful counsel, I,
ready to gripe his hair, have hover'd here;
for unrepenting souls none can absolve,
nor can a man repent yet prosecute his sin,
involving as this would a contradiction clear.' 120

"O wretched me! what dire amazement mine,
when that dark clutcher grasped my neck, and cried:
'Ha, babe! didst think me no logician, eh?'
"To Minos straight we sped, and that fell judge
eight times his tail whiskt round his scaly back. 125
Then biting it in spiteful rage, exclaimed:
'Another blockhead for the thievish fire!'
Thence, as thou seest, I now enshrouded rove;
my heart by grief and fire consumed."
When died his words away, 130
the flame departed, moaning as before,
waving and tossing up its taper horn.
My Guide and I resumed our march
along the reef, up to the following arch, that spans
the foss where those receive their meet reward 135
who gathered guilt in sowing discord round.

CANTO XXVIII.

EVEN in speech unfettered, who,
by utmost repetition, could make clear
the blood and wounds I now descried?
All tongues assuredly would fail,
for words and human intellect 5
have no sufficient grasp to comprehend so much.
If all the people were assembled here,
who on Apulia's once eventful soil
bewailed their blood by Romans shed;
all victims of that Punic war prolonged, 10
which reaped so rich a crop of finger rings
for Hannibal, as faithful Livy writes;
and every Greek and Saracen who felt
the biting blows of Norman Guiscardo;
all Manfred's mingled host, whose bones yet bleach
at Ceperâno, where th' Apulians treach'rous proved;
with such besides as fell at Tagliacôzzo, where
Alardo by his craft defeat to victory changed;
if all were here, and this did show his shoulder speared,

and that his leg-stump raw, it would but feebly serve
to indicate the ninth ward's hideous strand.

A hogshead with its crown smashed in
gapes less than one sad wretch I saw
ript from the chin through breast and belly too.
Exposed his vitals were, the liver and the lights, 25
and that so much enduring sack
which daily mashes what we daily eat.

Whilst I considered this astounding sight,
the creature looked at me, then tore his open chest,
and said: "See how I rip and rend my flesh. 30
In me great Máhomet thus mangled see;
and there goes Caliph Ali, sorely grieved—
slashed in the face from chin to frontal bone.

"All with us in this den beheld
scandal and schism in their lifetime did sow, 35
and for that cause they're cloven here.
A demon lurks behind, who splits us thus;
and with his whetted scimitar
regashes us when each completes
the circuit of the doleful road; 40
for every wound is closed and heal'd
ere we unto his stand return.

But who art thou thus musing on the bridge,

perhaps a little to delay the punishment adjudged
by Minos on thy self-accusing plea?" 45

"He is not dead, nor borne by guilt along
to torment here," replied my Guide for me;
"but privileged he is all knowledge to acquire;
and I, a shade, am charged to lead him through
Inferno's dreadful scale, from Circle unto Circle down:
This is as true as that I speak to thee."

More than a hundred spirits, hearing this,
stopt in the foss to stare at me,
forgetting, in astonishment, their rankling wounds.

"Thou who mayst see the sun ere long, 55
pray warn friar Dólcino,
that if he would his advent here retard,
with victuals he must store his fort,
lest deep'ning snow upon Sebello give
the Novarese a chance by famine to prevail." 60

With one foot raised to go,
thus Máhomet exclaimed,
then stretched his leg and went.

Another, who, with throat cut down,
and nose slit to the brows, 65
and only one ear left,
stood gazing in the crowd,
came forward then, and laid

his gory wind-pipe bare,
and said: "O Uncondemned,
whom I on Latian ground have seen,
unless thy features much mislead,
recal thou Pier da Medicína's name,
shouldst thou again behold the gentle slopes,
that from Vercelli dip to Marcabó;
and make it known to Fano's worthiest two,
to Angiolello, and to Guido del Casséro, that,
unless our foresight here be mockery,
they, tied in sacks, from their own ship
shall be cast headlong near Cattolica
through a fell tyrant's treacherous device:
From Cyprus to Majorca's isle
saw Neptune ne'er such foulness done
by pirates or by Argive crews.
That one-eyed traitor, Maltestino, who
doth hold the lands that one beside me now
had better ne'er have seen,
to parley shall invite them both,
then serve them so that they no more shall need
their prayers and vows against Focâra's blast."

To him I said: "Explain and show,
an thou wouldst have me speak of thee above,
who'd better ne'er have seen that land?"

Then he the jaws of one of his companions seized,
and set his mouth agape, and cried: 95
"Behold the outcast, dumb at last.
'Tis Curio who, expelled from Rome,
spurred Cæsar past the Rubicon,
saying: 'To men prepared 'tis fatal to delay.'"
Ah me, how abject seemed the wretch, 100
there standing with his tongue slit up,
which had in speech so daring been!
Beyond him one whose hands were both cut off,
raising the stumps up in the steamy air,
so that the blood dript o'er his face, 105
cried out: "Remember Mosca too,
who said: 'The deed being done the strife is o'er,'
which led to that the Tuscans mourn for still."
"And to the ruin of thy kindred too," I said;
whereat, his pains on pains accumulating fast, 110
with moans and ravings he went by;
while I remained to view the throng,
and see what I should dread,
without some proof, to speak of now,
were not I justified by conscience clear, 115
that comrade who bears up a man,
when honest thoughts his breastplate are.
Yes, certainly I saw, and seem to see it still,

amid the crowd, a headless trunk that moved,
and walked on with the lamentable band. 120

Fast by the hair it held its own dissevered head,
swinging it like a lantern to and fro.
When towards us turned the face, it sighed: "Ah me!"
Unto himself a lamp the sufferer was;
for man and lamp were one; 125
a puzzle that 'tis thine to solve.

When just below the bridge the trunk arrived,
it raised its arm, holding the head to us,
nearer to bring the words it spake,
which were: "My penalty be plain to thee, 130
thou breathing soul, a pilgrim 'mong the dead.
Do any spirits suffer pangs that equal mine?
That thou take tidings of my state,
in me behold Bertram dal Born, the Troubadour,
who evilly advised the young king Hal, 135
and rebels to each other made the sire and son.
Achitophel not greater scourge did prove
to David and hot-blooded Absalom:
"I parted ties of blood, and I, alas!
carry about my brain, thus parted from its source
within the stock on which it grew:
"In this the law of Retribution see."

CANTO XXIX.

MINE eyes inebriate by
the multitude of mourners, and their diverse wounds,
I longed to stay and weep;
but Virgil said: "Why gazing so?
Thy sight seems buried still 5
amid the mutilated shades.
'Tis not thy wont so long to rest.
If thou wouldst count the souls, bethink thee that
the valley two and twenty miles goes round,
and that already is the moon beneath our feet, 10
while short's the time conceded us
other and stranger things to see."
"Hadst thou," I ventured to reply,
"observed the cause of my keen search,
a longer stay had been vouchsafed me here." 15
Meanwhile he onward moved; and I, behind,
continuing, said: "Within that gulf,
to which, spell bound,
mine eyes were then,

a spirit of my blood I deem there is, 20
who now bemoans the guilt that proves so costly here."
"Waste not," the Master said,
"an anxious thought on him.
There let him stay, and pass we to the next;
for at the bridge-foot I perceived him well 25
point unto thee with threat'ning finger shake.
'Ho now, Gerí del Bello' growled a shade at him.
Just then thy gaze upon
Bertram dal Born was fixed,
and so thy kinsman past unseen." 30
"O, good my Guide, his violent death,
yet unavenged for him
by any partner in his shame,
fills him with indignation fierce,
and therefore went he by disdainfully: 35
this added torment makes me pity him the more."
Conversing thus, we journeyed to the rock,
whence might be seen another valley's range,
but for the darksome air.
Its summit reached, we looked into 40
that final cloister of sad Malebolge's ten,
and its lay-brethren saw,
while their sharp lamentations pierced

me with so many ruth-barbed shafts,
that closely with my hands I shut mine ears. 45

Grief like to theirs might be if all the ailing in
the Valdichiâna lazars, and all whom autumnal heat
doth fever in Maremma and Sardinian fens
into a ditch were pell-mell thrown.—
Such was the sight that met us here, 50
dimmed by the vapours of the loathsome heaps.

Descending on the last moat's inner dike,
and, turning to our left,
a clearer view we had
of that dark depth wherein 55
unerring Justice sets
the lot of forgers, who upon her rolls are found.

More sorrow had not caused
the sight of all the stricken on Egina's isle,
when so malignant was the air 60
that every creature, little worms and all,
dropt dead—the poets say
the ancient races were rehatched
from emmits' eggs in myriads laid—
than felt I at the vision of those various spirits, who
lay languishing throughout that awful dell:
This one upon the belly, that upon the shoulders of

a neighbour sprawled; while others in the putrid gore,
in blindness, wriggled through the mass.
On step by step, without a word, we went 70
seeing and hearing dismally.
Some sinners were mere jelly clots:
quite motionless till shaken by the rest;
but two I saw, all spotted o'er with leprosy,
and leaning on each other, back to back, 75
in whom was more vitality, for never did I see
curry-comb plied by stable boy, for whom
his master waits, or who's impatient for his bed,
with half the speed that each of those poor spirits clawed,
with all his nails, upon his fretted skin, to mitigate
the fury of his itch, which could not otherwise be eased:
And as a knife may scrape the scales
from bream, or other fish, that has them larger still,
so was the scurf drawn from the spirits' flesh.
"O thou," exclaimed my Guide, to one of these,
"thus tearing off thy coat of mail,
and making violent pincers of thy finger ends;
pray tell me if among ye any Latians are:
so may thy growing nails
eternally suffice for thy relief." 90

"Ah, we ourselves are Latians—we who thus
disfigured are," one murmured through his tears;
"but who art thou inquiring thus?"
"I," said my Guide, "am one who goest down
with this still mortal man, from steep to steep, 95
to show him Hell."
At this their backs sprang quick apart,
and, trembling, each one turned him unto me;
as did some others, who more distant were.
My Master then, looking at me, 100
advised: "Address them now as thou shalt please;"
and I began at his request:
"So may your memory not fade
up on your early homes,
but under many circling suns endure; 105
relate to me your nations and your names.
Let not your ugly and repulsive lot
deter ye from disclosure of your former state."
"I of Arezzo was," one shade began,
"To please Albéro da Siena I was burnt alive; 110
but I'm not here through that for which I died:
Lightly, and jestingly I to Albero said,
'I through the air could wing my way;'
and he, well blest with fond simplicity and little wit,
willed I should teach him how to fly; 115

and just because I made him not a Dædalus
he coaxed his prelate sire to treat me to the stake;
but unto this low chasm
it was for cheating men by alchemy
experienced Minos cast me down." 120

"Now were there ever," to the Poet I remarked,
"so vain a people as the Sienese?
I don't believe the French are half so vain."

Whereat the other leper, who o'erheard,
replied: "I pray: Except the Stricca, who 125
his fortune spent with so much winning modesty;
and Niccolo, who was the first to burn
rich cloves instead of sticks, when cooking capons in
Siena, where such vanities became the rage.
Also except the company in which 130
were squandered Caccia's vines and woods,
while th' Abbagliato jested o'er the pot.

"But, that thou know who takes thy part
against the Sienese, pray look at me again,
and read it in my face that I 135
the shadow of Capócchio am;
he who did falsify the metals by his alchemy:
If I do recognise thee, Sir, thou wilt remember that
with perfect art I mimicked nature's face."

CANTO XXX.

WHEN Juno, jealous of the damsel Semelè,
was much incensed against the Theban race,
as she already more than once had shown,
Æolus' son, king Athamas, so frenzied grew,
that seeing Ino, his good wife, with her two sons, 5
one on each arm, come through the wood,
he cried: "Spread out the nets, that at the pass
I take the lioness and both her whelps;"
and then, insensate, stretched his ruthless claws,
and young Learchus snatched, 10
and whirled and dashed him on a stone,
while Ino with the other child plunged madly in the sea;
and when by fortune was o'erthrown
the haughty reign of daring Troy,
and Priam with his kingdom wholly blotted out, 15
sad Hecuba, a captive, in her wretchedness
beheld Polyxena, her daughter, slain,
and then forlorn, upon the bleak sea sand,
descried her Polydorus' mangled corse,
and at the sight, all grief distraught, 20

with rabid barkings, grovelled on the shore;
but neither Theban nor yet Trojan Furies have
e'er goaded human creatures, or e'en beasts,
to such distraction, with malignity more fierce
than was displayed by two pale naked shades I saw
scouring the liar's den, biting and gnashing like
lean swine thrust from their sty at feeding time.

Of these one struck Capócchio, and, with fangs
fast in his neck-joint, dragged him up and down
until his belly was quite tattered by the rocks. 30

He of Arezzo, who in apprehension crouched,
whispered me: "Gianni Schicchi is that goblin dread;
infuriate roves he, mangling other shades."

"So may," I said to him, "thy back be safe
from her sharp teeth, pray tell me, ere she pass, 35
who that she-fury is who thus with Gianni goes."

And he: "Ah, that's the ancient spirit of
the scelerat foul Myrrha, who,
in passion strong, deceived her father by
a treacherous disguise, 40
misleading him with baser aim
than Gianni had—he happily departeth now—
who, bribed by promise of a handsome mare,
did simulate in bed Donâti, who was dead,
and made, as tho' by him, a will in legal form." 45

When that terrific pair, who rivetted my gaze,
had wildly routed by,
I turned me to review the other souls misborn;
and one I noted rather like a lute in shape,
at least like something of the sort he'd been 50
if he had had his legs cut off.
A load of dropsy, which, with humours, so
distorts the just proportions of the human frame
that face and figure cease to harmonise,
made him sit open-lipped, 55
just like a hectic who is worn down by thirst,
and one lip curls to his chin, the other to his nose.

"O ye," he cried, "exempt tho' why I can't conceive,
from all the sorrows of this filthy hole,
observe and understand the pitiable state 60
of master Adamo, of Brescia once.

"Enough and still to spare of all I wished had I,
and now one drop of water vainly I implore.
The limpid rills that ripple down
green Casentino's mossy knolls, 65
and e'en to Arno make the meadows cool and moist,
in tantalizing visions flow incessantly before mine eyes:
nor idle is the image fond, it parches and it withereth
more than the hot disease that macerates my face.

"'Tis thus that rigid justice makes 70

the sweetness of the land in which my sins were done
the bitter cause of triple woes to me—
Lo, now, Romena's olive slopes appear!
Romena, where the Baptist's money I debased,
and for my trouble I to ashes was consumed. 75

"But could I here behold the tortured souls
of Guido, Alessandro, and their brother count,
for Branda's spring I would not change the sight!
And one's already here, if truth the shadows speak,
who madly through the dungeon roam: 80
But what avails it me whose limbs are burthened so?
Ah, were I just so light that I
each hundred years a single inch could move,
off I should waddle, labouring on the road,
and grope for him among these ever mould'ring heaps;
although eleven miles the circle winds,
and with, they say, full half a mile of breadth.

"'Tis through those counts I'm fettered here.
Induced by them, I stamped some florins that
had three full carats of alloy." 90

Then I: "Who are the grovelling pair,
close to thy right confines, and steaming like
a hand that's wetted in a frosty day?"

"Here were they when I tumbled down," replied
the dropsied shade. "Ne'er have they turned since,

nor do I think they'll rise in any age to come.
One's Potiphar, the slanderer of Joseph just;
the other Sinon, who the horse got into Troy:
'Tis fever makes them reek in that offensive way."

At this one of the two, ill-pleased, perhaps, 100
when scouted by a tongue e'en fouler than his own,
struck with his fist the coiner's swollen paunch,
which thereupon resounded like a drum.

But Adamo could strike, and swinging round,
he gave the worthy Greek a whack upon the face, 105
remarking as he did it: "True, I cannot move away,
so ponderous I'm grown,
but I've an arm free for services like this!"

Growled Sinon then: "When going to the stake,
trussed for the roasting, slower were thy hands, 110
tho' quick enough when coining in thy mint."

"Yea, not a doubt of it," said Adamo;
"but didst thou speak so honestly
when questioned by the Trojan chiefs?"

"If false my words thy coins were falsified. 115
For just a single crime thus loathsomely I lie;
but thou for more than any other fiend."

"Ah perjured wretch!" the heavy-sides rejoined,
"forgettest thou the steed with stomach full of spears?
Afflicting be the thought the world knows thy sin."

"And more affliction be thy cracking tongue,"
retorted Sinon, wroth, "and sicken thee the juice
that makes a mountain of thy belly bag."
To which the coiner: "Foulest mouth!
thus gabbling arrant lies, just as in other days; 125
if I do thirst tho' water-stuffed,
thou hast a racked and burning brain,
and greedily to lap the mirror of Narcissus up
no pressing invitation wouldst thou need."
Intently I was listening to their curious talk, 130
when my good Master said: "Still! Listen then!
A little longer and we quarrel, friend."
When thus he spake, with anger in his tone,
a flush of shame crimsoned my face,
where glows it yet again at thought of my offence. 135
Then as a man who dreams he suffering endures,
and, dreaming, wishes 'twere a dream—
desiring that which is as tho' in fact 'twere not—
I, wholly paralyzed and dumb,
longed to excuse my fault, and knew not that 140
I pardon won in wishing it.
"Less shame than thine
a greater sin would wash away,"
the Master said: "so set thy heart at ease.

But happ'ning to be nigh again 145
when men thus bandy words,
remember I am with thee, always by thy side :
Degrading is the wish such talk to over-hear.

CANTO XXXI.

THE very tongue that stang,
inflaming both my cheeks,
the medicine supplied:
So, I have heard, Achilles' lance,
which first his father used, 5
could wound and heal alternately.
Now turned we from that pestilential vale,
and up the bank that hems its inner side,
mounted we slowly, and, in silence, crossed.
Here there was neither day nor darkling night, 10
and scarcely could mine eyes anticipate my steps;
but from above a horn sent down a blast,
e'en louder than a thunder peal,
which drew my sight along its cloven course,
till on a single spot arrested was my gaze. 15
No louder blast the blare Orlando blew,
when Charlemagne's crusade abortively was closed,
in blood and rout, upon the plains of Roncesvalles.
Short time my face was turnèd to the sound,

when lofty towers methought I could perceive ; 20
and wondering, I cried : "What city is aloft?"
"So long the space of gloom," replied my Guide,
"the searching glance must travel through,
impatient fancy buildeth castles in the air.
Arrived upon the height, it plainly will be seen, 25
how very much the sense by distance is deceived ;
so spur thy lagging pace to get the sooner there."
Then lovingly he led me onward by the hand ;
and, going, said : "Before we reach the place,
lest thou shouldst be astounded at the sight, 30
know, yonder objects towers are not but men,
gigantic still, tho' partly by the bank concealed ;
for to the waist, within the central pit, they stand."
As when a mist dissolveth gradually,
and, point by point, unto the eye is shaped 35
that which the vapours crowding round obscure,
so now—I peering through the murky air
as we still nearer to the brink approach—
that fancied town unto the dread reality doth change.
As Monteréggion bears a diadem of towers 40
upon its circling wall,
the lofty bank encompassing the pit
was turreted by giants, ranged along the edge

in horrible array; tho' menaced still by Jove,
when, vivid in the sky, his thunderbolts are sent. 45

Of one of them already saw I well the face,
the shoulders and the breast, and of the belly part,
and, hanging at his sides, his pond'rous arms too.
When nature ceased to fashion creatures so immense,
in limiting her powers, she properly deprived 50
the fickle god of war of men of might like these.
And if she persevere in making elephants and whales,
repenting not the act, he who considers well
therein will more perceive her equitable ways:
'tis when the might of mind is added to the craft 55
of brutal disposition in the giant-moulded frames
that ordinary men are wholly overwhelmed.

The visage of that giant seemed to me as large
as is the brazen pine St. Peter's shows at Rome;
and all his other parts were in proportion cast; 60
so that the bank, which hid his under half,
yet let us see so much of him,
that if three Friezelanders had on each other stood,
they had not bragged of reaching even to his beard;
for from the neck, just where one's cloak is claspt, 65
unto the girdling dike, he measured thirty spans.

"Rafauk matee amurk aree zabeck,"

his savage mouth began now frothily to jabber out,
not being well adapted to a psalmody more sweet.
Towards him my Guide: "O spirit dull, 70
keep to thy horn and vent thyself through it,
when rumbleth rage or passion hoarse in thee.
Search on thy neck, where hangs the belt
which holds it fast, O dunce confused;
why, look, it clasps itself upon thy brawny chest." 75
And then to me: "His jargon doth himself accuse.
Nimrod is this, who Babel's tower contrived;
that ill device from which so many tongues prevail.
Leave we him gaping there, and waste no words,
for every language is to him as clear 80
as unto others his, which no one comprehends."
So past we, leftward wending on,
and, at a cross-bow's shot beyond,
perceived a monster yet more huge and wild.
I know not who sufficient strength could have 85
to bind his mighty limbs, yet he was bound—
his right arm fast behind, the other fast in front,
by one long chain that shackled him,
and, on the upper half of his vast shape,
was five times twisted round. 90
"This haughty spirit thought his powers to try
against the mighty Jove," my Guide observed,

"whence he hath this reward.
His name is Ephialtes. Valiant he and great
when formidable proved the giants to the gods : 95
The arms he flourished then wieldeth he no more."
Then I : "If possible it be,
I willingly would give experience to mine eyes
of old Briáreus' vast immeasurable frame."
"Not far from this thou shalt behold," he said, 100
"Antæus, who's unfettered, and can speak.
By him we shall be set in sin's profoundest cell.
"Far off is great Briáreus placed.
He too is bound, and not unlike the monster here,
save that his face is more ferocious still." 105
An earthquake never made a castle reel
with shocks more violent than great Ephialtes now,
in spasms, sent through his colossal limbs.
No sharper dread of death I ever felt before :
excess of fear alone my flick'ring life had quenched,
had not I been supported by perception of his chains.
Encouraged thus, I sped on, keeping with my Guide,
till close unto Antæus, who, besides his head,
some five good ells, at least, above the bank displayed.
"O thou who in that fateful plain 115
where Scipio brave, in sight of Carthage, took
the crown of glory dropt when Hannibal retired,

a thousand lions seized, and for thy booty kept;
and through whose arm, hadst thou been in the war
thy brethren waged so long, 'tis perfectly believed
the sons of earth had victors proved,
thy aid afford to us, nor grudge the toil,
to place us where in ice Cocytus' stream is locked.
Compel us not great Typhon nor yet Tityus to seek;
for one is here who can your great desire content:
so bend thee, nor contract in sullen frown thy brows.
Thy praises on the earth my comrade can renew,
for he's alive, and looks for length of days,
should grace not call him ere his sun's decline."

The Master thus. Then down Antæus stretched
those hands whose iron gripe once Hercules did rue,
and lightly held my Guide,
who, when the fingers clasped his waist,
said quickly: "Come within my reach;"
then made of us one bundle tight. 135

Such as appears Bologna's leaning tower, to one
who stands beneath its hanging side, when clouds
shoot over it away, and, by their passage swift,
give it the air of bending down,
such seemed the giant when he stooped, and I 140
would gladly have some other passage found;

but in the pit, where Judas curst, and Lucifer,
effectually are cramped, he set us down in peace.
Then, ling'ring not, he raised himself,
as in a ship the mast is raised. 145

CANTO XXXII.

If I had measures harsh and hoarse,
such as would suit the dismal hole
to which Inferno's rocky steeps converge,
the gist of my conception should
more forcible expression find, 5
but failing such, I falter on the verge;
for no light task it is, or suited to a pu'rile tongue,
the universe's central depths
in all their dread sublimity to show.
So may those Maidens help, who tuned the lyre 10
Amphion struck to raise the Theban wall,
that with the facts my words in some accordance be.
O refuse of creation! more than all distrest!
shut in this place of which 'tis harrowing to speak,
better had ye on earth as sheep or goats run wild.
When thus within the darksome pit,
and lower than the giant's feet,
whilst I still scanned the battlements around,
a voice exclaimed: "Beware of passing here.

Be careful of thy feet, lest thou upon the sculls 20
of thy afflicted brothers tread."

Then looking down, I saw, before me and below,
a lake, which, through excess of frost,
seemed rather crystal rock than ice from water spun.
Never did Austrian Danube veil with thicker sheet
his winter course; nor Don, remote.
beneath the frigid sky, more Russian rigour show:
Tabérnicch's peak, and Pietrapana's marble cliff
on it in fragments hurled,
had not made e'en its margin creak. 30

As frogs sit croaking, with their muzzles o'er
the water shown, about the hour when maids
dream of their gleanings in the autumn fields,
so, livid up to where the hue of shame appears,
were luckless shadows in the ice, 35
who stork-like chatt'rings jabbered with their teeth.

Down-cast by all the face was held.
Their restless jaws, and tearful eyes,
their bitter cold, and poignant woe expressed.

When I awhile had looked about, 40
I at my feet perceived two souls so closely set,
the ice-clogged hair of each unto his neighbour's froze.

"Ye whose cold breasts in such strict union are,
pray who were ye?" I said. They raised their heads;

and when their faces unto me were turned, 45
their eyes, that had with inward moisture gleamed,
gushed tears, which flowing o'er their lips
there quickly froze, and fastened them together, so
that board to board was never tighter cramped:
whence to such fury were those spirits stung 50
that like two goats they butted with their brows.

A shade by frost-bite of both ears deprived,
and who, with face still bent, descried me in the ice,
now said: "Why dost thou gaze so fixedly?
If thou wouldst know who are these two, 55
the glade by which the clear Bisenzio flows
was by their sire Alberto, and by them possessed.
One mother bore them both; and thou may'st search
Caïna through, yet fail to find a shade
who is more worthy thus to be congealed— 60
not Modred, he whose breast and shadow at one blow
King Arthur's spear did penetrate;
nor yet Focâccia, nor this spirit that
obstructs my view with his projecting head,
and Sassol Mascheroni used to be: 65
If Tuscan thou, thou knowèst him.

"Now that I be not forced to further speech,
the Cámicion de' Pazzi view in me.
I wait Carlín, near whom by contrast I am pure."

A thousand visages, whose lips were drawn 70
to dogish grins by cold, I saw, with tremblings that
yet shake my limbs when I recall the frozen pools.
While we were wending to the central point
to which all weighty matters gravitate,
and I was shiv'ring in the everlasting chill, 75
through will divine, or chance, or destiny,
I know not which, in walking 'mong the heads,
one with my foot I struck severely on the face.
Growling it cried: "Why tramplest me?
If not more vengeance to inflict 80
for Montaperti, why molest me now?"
Then I: "O Master pause a little here
that certain doubts I solve by questioning;
thereafter I shall hasten as thou wilt."
The Master stood; and I addressed the wretch,
who violently reviled me in his rage.
"Who then art thou who railest thus?" I said.
"Nay, who art thou that Antenóra traversest,
bruising our cheeks with force but ill excused
e'en by thy weight wert thou alive?" he howled. 90
"Alive I am," was my reply, "and if
thou on the earth wouldst still remembered be,
'twill suit thee well to let thy name be heard."
"The opposite I wish," he said,

"so take thyself away, and pester me no more; 95
for poor art thou at flatt'ring in the icy vault."
Then seized I on his hair behind,
and cried: "Thy name at once confess,
or every tuft I draw."
"Well, tear it all away," he cried; 100
"but who I am I tell not even shouldst thou dash
a thousand times thy foot upon my wounded head."
Upon my hand some of his locks were twined,
and many I had torn up sharply by the roots,
he hiding still his face, and barking in his pain, 105
when cried a shade: "Why, Bocca, what wouldst thou?
Seemeth it not enough to clatter with thy jaws,
that thou dost bark? What devil clutcheth thee?"
"Ha! now be dumb," delighted, I exclaimed.
"O traitor vile, true tidings to thy shame 110
assuredly I'll carry up."
"Begone," he screamed, "and slander as thou list.—
But stay; if thou indeed escape to light,
forget not him so ready with my name.
The Frankish bribe, he late repenteth here. 115
'Duéra of Cremona,' thou canst say, 'I saw
among the villains rivetted in ice.'

And should men ask for other names,
lo, there's Beccária's head,
once severed by the vengeful Florentines. 120
Gianni del Soldanéri sticks beyond,
with Gánellon, and Tríbaldello who
withdrew Faneza's bolts at dead of night."
When we had past that bitter soul,
two spirits I observed together in one hole, 125
frozen so close one's head the other's cap appeared.
And as the hungry chew their loaf impatiently,
the upper on the under plied his grimy teeth
just where the brain and nape unite.
With not more spitefulness did Tydeus once 130
gnaw Ménalippus' temples cold,
than ravened he upon that scull and neck.
"O thou," I said, "who dost so brutally express
thy hate of him whom thou dost feast on so,
thy rage explain, on this agreement, that 135
if thou canst well thy wrath excuse,
I, learning who ye are, and his offence,
may in the world above compensate thee,
should I return ere withered be my tongue."

CANTO XXXIII.

THEN from that meal the sinner raised his mouth,
and having wiped it on the hair of him
whose head he had laid waste,
he thus began: "Thou wouldst that I revive
a desp'rate grief, of which the thought alone 5
doth wring my heart ere I my woes detail.
But if thy words the fruitful seed may prove
of infamy to him, the traitor I devour,
not saltest tears mine utterance shall choke.
"I know thee not; nor by what means 10
thou hast this depth attained can I divine;
but Florentine thy language is.
"Count Ugolino was my name;
Ruggiere, the archbishop, he.
I now relate why I so much his neighbour am. 15
"How by his vile deceits,
I, having faith in him, was foully caught,
and put to death, 'tis needless to explain;
but less 'tis known how cruel was my end.

And this I now reveal, that thou conceive
the injury which I through him sustained.
" A loop-hole in the cell,
which after me is Famine named,
(and where yet other souls shall pine)
already through its op'ning several moons had shown,
when o'er me came an evil-omened sleep,
which from the future rent the veil away.
" I seemed to see this man as master of the hounds,
hunting a wolf and whelps, upon the hill
that shuts out Lucca from the Pisan's view.
Gualandi, with Sismondi and Lanfranc,
he placed in front, to lead the chase
with meagre, keen and wary dogs.
Not long the run when lagged
that father and his sons, and then, methought,
I saw their limbs by sharp teeth torn.
" Before the dawn was I awake,
and, list'ning, heard my boys, who were with me,
sob in their sleep, and call for bread.
" Hardened art thou, if not already sad
in thinking what my heart foreboded then:
if weeping not, at what art wont to weep?
" Soon they awoke; and it was near the hour,

when usually our morning meal was brought;
and each was troubled by his fev'rish dream. 45

"Then at the horrid tower's low base, I heard
the door nailed up, and quick steps move away.
Without a word, I looked into the faces of my sons.
I did not weep, for I within was turned to stone.
They wept; and one, my little Anselm, said: 50
'Thou lookest so! Father what aileth thee?'
yet still I shed no tear; nor answered I
through all that day, and all the following night,
until again the sun looked up upon the world.
When then a feeble ray 55
into our dreary prison stole,
in their four faces I discerned the aspect of my own;
and, in mine anguish, I bit both my hands.

"Thinking I did it from desire to eat,
my children quickly rose, and said: 60
'O father, we shall suffer less if thou wilt eat of us:
From thee we have this wretched flesh:
'tis thine to take.'

"I calmed myself lest they should more unhappy be.
That day, and through the next, we all were mute. 65
O unrelenting earth! why didst not swallow us?

When came at length the fourth slow dawn,
before me on the flags, my Gaddo threw himself,

and gasped: 'Why father dost no help afford?'
then died; and, plainly as thou seest me now, 70
I saw the rest sink one by one,
between that morning and the sixth;
when, wholly blind, I fell to groping over each,
and three days called them after they were dead:
then fasting more prevailed than grief." 75

This said, he turned his bloodshot eyes,
and with his teeth re-struck the bishop's scull,
and, like a hungry dog, crunched greedily the bone.

Ah Pesa! scandal to the race
inhabiting that lovely land where 'Si' is heard, 80
since slow thy neighbours are to punish thee,
may now Gorgona and Capraia's isle
break loose, and dam up Arno's mouth,
that every living soul in thee be drowned!

What though Count Ugolino may 85
thy castles have betrayed;
could that excuse the torture of his sons?
Thou modern Thebes! made not their tender years
Brigáta, Hugo, and the gentle pair
already named, unwitting of their father's treachery?

Onward we went to where the frost
doth rudely swathe another people, who
bend not their faces down, but throw them back;

whose very tears permit them not to weep,
for those first shed collect upon their eyes, 95
and fill the cavity beneath their brows
with crystal scales,
then grief, that rising fails to pass,
turns inward to increase their agony.
Although, as struck by callousness, 100
my face to all sensation was,
through cold, benumbed,
yet now I seemed to feel a motion in the air,
whereof I asked: "My Master, whence comes wind
in this chill region where no vapours rise?" 105
And he: "Soon shalt thou go
to where thine eyes will answer thee,
in seeing how the gale is sent abroad."
Then of the wretches in the icy crust,
one cried: "O souls, though e'en so cruel that 110
with us ye share this utmost range of woe,
lift from mine eyes the stony veil,
that I may vent the grief which loads my heart,
the little while allowed before the tears congeal."
"If thou wouldst I should aid thee thus," I said,
"tell me thy name; and if I free thee not,
may I into the bottom of the ice-gulf sink!"
"I am friar Alberígo," he replied,

"the same who served the evil-fruit:
For figs I here in dates am amply paid!" 120
"What, thou art dead too!" marvelled I.
And he: "I know not how
it fareth with my body in the world aloft.
So privileged is this bleak Ptolomêa that
oft hither drops the soul 125
ere Atropos the thread of life hath cut.
And, that more willingly thou pick
the vit'rous tear-glaze from my face,
know: when a soul betrays, as I betrayed,
immediately her body by a demon is possessed, 130
who holds and uses it until
its earthly hours have quite run out;
while she, swift hurl'd, to this sad cistern comes.
The body of the shade that winters just behind,
perchance, upon the earth yet multiplies its sins. 135
If thence but now arrived this may be known to thee:
He Branca d'Oria is; and many springs
have glowed above while he's been shiv'ring here."
"I deem thou dost delude me," I replied,
"for Branca d'Oria has not died: 140
he eats and drinks, he sleeps, and clothes himself."
"Within the Sinnerclutchers' foss above,
where boils the clammy pitch," the Friar explained,

"his victim Michael Zanchi had not yet arrived,
when d'Oria left in Genoa a devil in his stead, 145
to vivify his body; while another devil kept
that of his kinsman partner in his treachery.
"But hither reach thy hand,
and open now mine eyes." I opened not his eyes;
for courtesy was undeserved by one so righteously condemned. 150
O Genoese, so lost to all nobility,
so utterly depraved, why suffers earth
the rankness of your shame?
With this worst spirit of Romagna, I
found one of ye, whose soul is for his sins 155
already in Cocytus pent,
while on the earth his body, devil-led, is roving still!

CANTO XXXIV.

"Arise the banners of Inferno's king
before us now!" my Guide exclaimed.
"Look well if thou himself discern."
As when the earth dense vapour breathes,
or night our hemisphere obscures, 5
appears a distant windmill, whirling in the breeze,
such seemed a fabric now in view;
and from its blast I shelter sought
behind my Guide, no other shield being near.
Already I was—trembling I relate— 10
where all the souls were covered by the ice,
and through it might like straws in glass be seen.
Some prostrate lay, and others stood erect—
this on his feet, that on his head;
while one had feet and face together drawn. 15
When we so far had moved along,
that to my Master it seemed time to shew
the Creature once in beauty robed,
he stept aside, and made me pause,

saying: "Lo Dis! and lo the place 20
where fortitude must arm thy soul!"
What tight constriction seized my throat,
and icy chill my bones, O Reader, ask me not,
for speech would fail to indicate my pain:
I died not nor remained alive. 25
Bethink thee, if not witless quite,
what I became when not alive or dead!
The Monarch of the Realm of Woe
forth from the ice to his mid-breast was shown;
and I in height more like a giant am 30
than giants emulate in size his arms.—
Consider what his whole must be
if it with those doth correspond.
If he was once as beautiful as he is ugly now,
and yet against his Maker raised a rebel front, 35
all sorrow well may be attributed to him.
How marvellous he seemed to me,
when on his head three faces I perceived!
Vermilion flamed the middle one.
The other two were close to it; 40
one looking o'er each shoulder blade;
and at his crest the three were joined.
Livid and yellow-hued that on the right;
the other like to those that Ethiopia breeds,
where first the Nile unto the plain descends. 45

Beneath each face were spread two mighty wings,
in size adapted to a bird so huge:
ship's sails of greater span I ne'er beheld.
They were not feathered, but on creaking frames,
smooth-stretched like vampire vans; 50
and as he flapped them, from him went three winds,
which deeper froze his bath, Cocytus' lake.
With his six eyes he wept; and down three beards
there foully slobbered tears and bloody foam.
His teeth in every mouth a sinner champed, 55
as flax is in a crushing-mill:
thus three at once were racked.
But from the chewing suffered less
he in the midst than from the monster's claws,
which skinned his legs oft as his wounds were scarred.
"The soul up there, who's tortured thus,"
my Guide began, "Judas Iscariot is:
His upper parts are bitten, and his lower clawed.
Of those whose heads hang from the lips on either side,
Brutus is he who in the negro mouth is held: 65
Lo, how he writhes, yet utters not a moan!
The other's Cassius, strongly limbed and vigorous.
"But night resurgent looms, and we
must from Inferno pass, now having seen the whole."
Then, at my Guide's desire, I clasped his neck;
and he, marking the time

when wide the wings were heaved,
applied him to the creature's hairy side,
and clambered down from shag to shag,
between the frozen crust and tangled fur. 75

Arrived at where
the haunch rounds to the hip-joint's swell,
my Guide, with toilsome effort, turned his head
to where his feet had been,
then grappled on the hair, as one in climbing does;
and since he rose, it seemed we into Hell returned.

"Cling fast," he said, panting as if forespent;
"for such the stair by which we leave
the Land Accurst."

Thereafter stretched he through a cloven rock, 85
and set me on its edge, whither he climbed
with slow and careful step.

I looked around, believing I should see
great Lucifer as he appeared before,
but saw his legs and feet inverted at my side. 90

That wonder then my brain confused
will not be doubted by those sluggish folk.
who fail to see what spot within the earth I'd past.

"Proceed again," the Master cried,
"for long and rough our way, and soon the sun 95
will shine upon the hemisphere that's o'er us now."

No palace hall we stood in then,
but in a cavern dungeon, dank,
with evil floor, and murky light.
"Before I part from the Abyss," 100
I said, when risen up: "O Master deign
to speak, and rid my mind of its perplexity.
Where is the ice? and where the mighty head?
And how sayest thou the sun so briefly will
pass round from eve to morn?" 105
"Thou dost suppose," he said, "we still are on
the centre's other side where I did grasp the Worm,
which of the globe the bitter kernel bores.
There wast thou whilst I downward moved,
but when I turned myself upon his hip we crost 110
the focus unto which all weighty things are drawn;
and now thou art below the hemisphere of sky
opposed to that which canopies our land's expanse,
and underneath whose central cope was nailed
that One born sinless, and who sinless lived. 115
Thou'rt on the smallest sphere within the earth:
Its other side's the Judas ice where Satan stands.
On this side it is dawn when there the sun has set.
He on whose shaggy hide we scrambled here,
remains congealed as when we saw him first. 120
Through this part of the earth he fell from Heaven;

and, as he past, the land, which out of ocean stood,
beneath the waves in terror veiled itself,
and in our hemisphere a refuge sought.
To shun him then, the rocks that filled this vault,
rushed up, and in the southern ocean piled
that Mount, whose rings we soon shall scale.*

"From Beelzebub to light, thus deep as Hell,
a crevice through this side of earth extends.
'T is dark, but can be followed by the ripple of a brook,
which through the rock, by crannies and by clefts,
a winding course has made, of slow declivity."

Virgil and I now entered that unbeaten way,
the world of light to seek again;
and, caring not for any rest, 135
he first and I behind, full steadily we clomb,
till, through an opening, suddenly I hailed
the heaven's expanse,
and saw again the stars.

* That Mount, Purgatory.

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